





# a study of the *Holy Spirit*





## Lesson 10: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

1. In the Church there has not been a Scripture that has been debated more than Acts 2:38.

Three controversial points are usually debated: (1) Whether "into" refers to forgiveness of sins before or after baptism; (2) Whether baptism is necessary for the remission of sins; (3) What the "gift of the Holy Spirit" refers to and whether it applies to modern saints or only those in the First Century. Our class will examine the Third controversy.

2.  There is no doubt that a "gift of the Holy Spirit" was promised and delivered.
  - a.  John 7:37-39—Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to believers.
  - b.  Acts 2:38, 39—Peter spoke about the promise.
  - c.  Acts 5:32—the promise was delivered (Romans 5:5; 8:8-11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; Galatians 4:6; Jude 19).







*Note:* While there is no question about these facts, the controversy is found in explanations about what was this "gift."

3. A study of Acts 2:38 does not really help resolve the question.
  - a.  Grammatically the text can mean two things. The phrase "of the Holy Spirit" is genitive and can mean something given by the Holy Spirit (i.e. "the gift OF God" Romans 6:23 means the gift which God gave), OR it can mean  the Holy Spirit was the gift (i.e. "a gift of money" refers to money being given). There is nothing in Acts 2:38 to tell us which meaning to use.
  - b.  The "promise" of 2:38 does not resolve the issue.
    - 1) It was "unto you."
    - 2) It was "to your children."
    - 3) It was "to all that are afar off."
    - 4) It was to "as many as" would be called.
4.  There are a number of theories about the "gift" of Acts 2:38. Four interpretations have been generally accepted in the Church (and which stand without any Scriptural objections)...

- a. ☞ The "gift" is the Holy Spirit indwelling within us exclusively by the Word of God (the Bible). This is often called the "representative indwelling." This view contended that the Word does everything the Holy Spirit does and thus the idea that the Holy Spirit is different in work from the Word is rejected. "There is no hint that he does anything in us other than through the instrumentality of the gospel" (Z.T. Sweeney, p. 139).
  - b. ☞ The "gift" is the miraculous gift measure of the Holy Spirit. The only other time the phrase "gift of the Holy Spirit" is found in Scripture is in connection with the miraculous baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 10. In Acts 8:20 the word "gift" refers to the miraculous. "They are promised the miraculous gift of the Spirit enabling them to perform what was promised in Mark 16:17-18" (Robert Taylor, *What Do You Know About The Holy Spirit*, 182).
  - c. ☞ The "gift" is the personal indwelling in the Holy Spirit in all who repent and are baptized. It is argued that the phrase "of the Holy Spirit" refers to the Person and not a gift He would offer. The genitive is used elsewhere to show that which was given referred to what was named: Galatians 3:14; 2 Corinthians 5:5; Hebrews 9:15; Revelation 14:11; Romans 4:11; James 1:12; etc. "It seems we are abundantly justified in believing that God gives the Holy Spirit to all believers who repent and are baptized" (Roy Lanier, Sr., *The Timeless Trinity*, 359).
  - d. ☞ The "gift" is a gift given by the Holy Spirit. It is suggested that the Holy Spirit is the "source" of the gift but is NOT the gift. "This is seen in transposition: the Holy Spirit's gift shall be received by everyone of you...The promise/gift of the Holy Spirit is salvation...and contains the perpetuity of all spiritual blessings found in sonship" (Richard Black, *Fort Worth Lectures 1980*, 202-203).
  - e. Note: Any of these four can be believed without error. They are certainly not identical but they all teach Truth.
5. ☞ There are some interpretations regarding the "gift" that are obviously error. These are founded upon a wresting of the Scriptures and lead many to believe in error.
- a. ☞ The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not the "gift." The world was to receive the command of Acts 2:38 but the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit baptism (John 14:17). This also contradicts Ephesians 4:5 since this would have two baptisms in force. Those in Acts 2 did not possess inspiration, tongues, or the other things which accompany Holy Spirit baptism.
  - b. ☞ The "gift" was not the ability to lay hands on others to impart miraculous spiritual gifts. Only Apostles were able to do this (Acts 8:18; 19:5, 6). If all who were baptized could do this, the events in Samaria would make no sense! Modern error regarding the Holy Spirit wants to claim that any "saved" can bestow the Holy Spirit by laying on hands for they have the "gift of the Holy Spirit." But such is not consistent with Scripture!

- c. ☞ The "gift" is not a miraculous presence of the Holy Spirit. It is claimed (on the basis of a wrong interpretation of Acts 19) that whenever one receives the "gift" then it will fill them with the miraculous presence of the Spirit which is shown by the supernatural events described in Acts 19. But this is wrong. It fails on the test of consistency with other Scripture. John was "filled" with the Holy Spirit from the womb (Luke 1:15) but he never worked a miracle! (John 10:41).
  - d. ☞ The "gift" is the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is contented that via this "gift" the Spirit will subtly lead or direct the believer through life. But again the test of consistency exposes this error! Those in Acts 2:36 were influenced by the Holy Spirit prior to their salvation. But they were not saved!
  - e. ☞ The "gift" is the human spirit made "holy." It is suggested that when they obeyed the gospel their human spirit would be made holy. But the Bible never calls the human spirit the "Holy Spirit"!
6. The broader context of Acts helps us attempt to explain this "gift." (Remember that we cannot know for sure what it is, but we can know what it is NOT!)
- a. ☞ If we take the gift to refer to some "gift" which the Holy Spirit gives, there are two basic problems to resolve.
    - 1) ☞ No one can tell us what that "gift" is that the Holy Spirit gives. It is totally subjective.
    - 2) ☞ The only other use of the phrase is in Acts 10 where the reference is undoubtedly to the Holy Spirit. To say that the obscure "gift" in Acts 2 is not the Holy Spirit, when the clear gift in Acts 10 is, is questionable reasoning.
  - b. If the gift of Acts 2:38 is that of the Holy Spirit Himself, we are able to apply other texts consistently.
    - 1) Acts 5:32 is in harmony—obedience is necessary.
    - 2) ☞ Galatians 4:6 is in harmony—sonship is verified.
    - 3) ☞ 1 Corinthians 6:19 is in harmony—the Christian's body is holy because the Holy Spirit dwells there.
    - 4) ☞ Romans 8:9, 11 is in harmony—the Spirit dwells in those who are sons of God.
  - c. ☞ The "gift" of the Holy Spirit, Himself, to all obedient to the gospel...**Transparency 10H**
    - 1) Is consistent with history. This is God the Spirit's dispensation and as such He is with man. Those who follow the divine will are in fellowship and company with the Holy

Spirit just as the saints were in company with the Father and Son during their dispensations.

- 2) Is **encouraging** to believers. *Note:* Acts 5:32; Galatians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13, 14. "Putting these thoughts together we learn that we become children of God by obeying him, and that he then gives us the Holy Spirit to dwell in our body as his temple, as the assurance that he will finally give us eternal life as our inheritance" (Lanier, p. 367).
7.  Concluding Thoughts—The "Gift of the Holy Spirit" is a much debated phrase. We will never know the absolute correct position until we are in heaven, and then it will not matter!
-  What can we do about this difficulty?
- a.  Understand that some things are unknowable (Deuteronomy 29:29). Our task is to learn and obey what is revealed.
  - b.  Avoid any contention and unnecessary disturbances over the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:19). Let us not become legalistic where God has not seen fit to reveal all the facts.
  - c.  Study the Scriptures for they alone are sufficient to answer our questions. Do not trust in man's error (2 Timothy 2:15).
  - d.  Uphold the Truth of God. Do not tolerate any error regarding the Holy Spirit. Be wise and gentle in using the Scripture to expose error (2 Timothy 2:23-26).