

The Indwelling Of the Holy Spirit

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

What does the Bible say about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? Can the Spirit be given? Who receives the Spirit? Does He dwell in all Christians? If so, does He dwell only through the Word, dwell along with the Word, or personally dwell separate and apart from the Word? What is the purpose of His indwelling today?

DOES THE BIBLE SAY THE SPIRIT WILL BE GIVEN?

Several passages in the New Testament either promise that the Holy Spirit would be given or state that He was given. The primary purpose of this section of our study is to show that He can be given.

(1) “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:13b). In this passage Jesus did not say “you,” meaning only the disciples to whom He was speaking, but said “those,” meaning any who asked.

(2) “He gives the Spirit without measure” (John 3:34b). The KJV adds in italics “unto him,” which does not appear in the Greek. This verse says that the Spirit is given but does not say to whom the Spirit is given.

(3) “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16, 17a). In this context Jesus was speaking only to the apostles, saying that the Spirit (Helper) would be given to them.

(4) “. . . ‘Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

(5) “And we are witnesses . . . and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32). Some significance must be placed on the fact that Peter did not say “us,” referring only to the apostles, but “those who obey Him,” meaning that all who obey Him receive the Holy Spirit.

(6) “. . . the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5). “Us” in this verse does not refer only to the apostles any more than the other personal pronouns in this section of Romans refer only to the apostles. “Us” (5:8), “our” (4:24, 25; 5:3), and “we” (5:1–3, 6, 8–11) in this context refer to Paul, the Roman Christians, and Christians in general.

(7) “. . . and gave us the Spirit in our hearts. . . .” (2 Corinthians 1:22).

(8) “. . . God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, . . .” (Galatians 4:6). “The Spirit of His Son [Christ]” refers to the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:11), who also revealed God’s Word during the Old Testament period (Acts 1:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

(9) “. . . God who gives His Holy Spirit to you” (1 Thessalonians 4:8). Some manuscripts have “us” instead of “you.” This is insignificant, because “us” in this passage includes Paul as well as those in Thessalonica. (See verse 7, where “us” appears.)¹

“The gift of the Holy Spirit” was poured out on the Gentiles (Acts 10:45; see 11:17). Luke did not record that they had received “a” gift of the Holy Spirit. (If he had, the reference could have been to speaking in tongues, one of the spiritual gifts; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 10, 11.) Rather, he said that they received “the” gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter commented that they had “received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 10:47)—“the same gift” the apostles had received (Acts 11:17)—and that they had been given “the Holy Spirit” (Acts 15:8). In this case it is clear that “the gift of the Holy Spirit” is the Holy Spirit Himself, for if He was given, then He is the gift they had received.

Because the same phrase, “the gift of the Holy Spirit,” is used in Acts 2:38, there is no reason why “the gift of the Holy Spirit” should be considered different in the two cases. The gift should be thought of as the Holy Spirit—not as some other gift from the Holy Spirit—unless such a conclusion contradicts other clear teachings of the Bible. This would not mean that miraculous powers were given to all who were baptized for the forgiveness of sins, but only that they had received the Holy Spirit. If “the gift of the Holy Spirit” in this passage refers to speaking in tongues, then why would not “the gift of the Holy Spirit” mean the same in Acts 2:38?

We must distinguish the *gift* of the Spirit from the *gifts* of the Spirit. The *gift* of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself, bestowed by the Father through the Messiah; the *gifts* of the Spirit are

¹Other passages also reflect that the Holy Spirit can be given to us. First John 3:24 says, “. . . by the Spirit whom He has given us.” Since “us” was used earlier to include both the writer and the readers (3:16, 18, 20), it does not refer exclusively to the apostles here. In 1 John 4:13 we read, “. . . He has given us of His Spirit.” Again, “us” includes the writer and the readers (note verse 12).

those spiritual faculties which the Spirit imparts, . . .²

J. W. McGarvey made this comment on the phrase “gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38:

By this is not meant that miraculous gift which had just been bestowed upon the apostles; for we know from the subsequent history that this gift was not bestowed on all who repented and were baptized, but on only a few brethren of prominence in the several congregations. The expression means the Holy Spirit as a gift; and the reference is to that indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, and without which we are not of Christ.³

The Spirit was with the apostles (John 14:17) but not *in* them during Jesus’ personal ministry (John 7:39).

TO WHOM IS THE SPIRIT GIVEN?

In the Christian Age, God gives the Spirit only to certain people. Most students of the Bible have no problem with the fact that the Spirit was given to the apostles (John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13) and to those who performed miracles (Acts 19:6). However, we may ask, “Did God also give the Spirit in a non-miraculous sense to others—and, if so, to whom?” The following Scriptures answer this twofold question:

(1) “. . . the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive” (John 14:17a). By “the world,” Jesus meant those under the power of the evil one (1 John 4:5, 6; 5:19), implying that Christians, not those of the world, receive the Spirit.

(2) “. . . how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:13).

(3) “But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive” (John 7:39a). The recipients of the Spirit in this passage are “those who believed” (that is, the obedient; Romans 1:5; 16:26), which includes a wider circle than the apostles.

(4) “. . . be baptized . . . for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

²F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 77.

³J. W. McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts of Apostles*, vol. 1 (N.p.: 1892; reprint, Delight, Ark.: Gospel Light Publishing Co., n.d.), 39.

(5) “. . . the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32).

(6) “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, . . .” (Galatians 4:6).

(7) “. . . did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:2) . This Scripture reveals that the Spirit is received by those who are willing to accept God’s Word with faith when they hear.

The general rule is that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is given to those who ask; however, asking for the Spirit is not the only requirement for receiving the Spirit. Obedience is also required (Acts 5:32), including faith, repentance, and baptism in Jesus’ name for the forgiveness of sins.

The Gentiles received the empowering of the Holy Spirit before they became God’s children and without the laying on the apostles’ hands (an exception to the general rule); however, this is no indication that they had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit before they became God’s children by being baptized. The general rule of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit after repentance, baptism, and remission of sins (Acts 2:38) would apply to them, even as it would to cases of conversion in the Book of Acts in which the gift of the Holy Spirit is not mentioned (Acts 8:35–39; 16:15, 33; 18:8). Except for the two cases of baptism in the Holy Spirit, the empowering of the Holy Spirit is recorded to have been given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 8:14–18; 19:5, 6; 2 Timothy 1:6).⁴

DOES THE SPIRIT DWELL IN CHRISTIANS?

If the Spirit has been given to us, then we must have the Spirit. Paul wrote, “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Romans 8:9b). He also wrote, “. . . the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, . . .” (1 Corinthians 6:19). In Hebrews we read that we are “made partakers of the Holy Spirit” (6:4). If we have the Spirit and are made partakers of the Spirit, then He must be with us.

The following passages answer some questions about the Spirit’s dwelling in Christians:

(1) “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells

in you” (Romans 8:9a).

(2) “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you” (Romans 8:11).

(3) “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

(4) “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, . . . ?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

(5) “In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22). Other possible translations of “in” the Spirit (Gk.: *en*) are “through” (KJV) and “by” (NIV). God dwells in us “in,” “through,” or “by” the Spirit—which must mean that the Spirit is in us and that God is in the Spirit.

(6) “Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us” (2 Timothy 1:14a).

(7) “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us” (James 4:5b). “The Spirit” in this passage may refer to the human spirit. (See the KJV and RSV.) Since the Greek language did not have capital letters, the immediate context or the wider context of the Bible is needed in order to determine whether to translate “spirit” or “Spirit.” Probably, this passage refers to the spirit all human beings have.

The fact that the Holy Spirit can dwell in us is hard to deny. He is sent into our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:22). The word “heart” as used in the Bible refers to our inner intellectual control center, which is the seat of a variety of mental activities and emotions:

understanding	Matthew 13:15
thoughts	Matthew 15:19
love	Matthew 22:37
reason	Mark 2:6
doubt	Mark 11:23
inner trouble	John 14:1
sorrow	John 16:6
rejoicing	John 16:22
conceiving ideas	Acts 5:4
intention	Acts 8:22; Hebrews 4:12
obedience	Romans 6:17
believing	Romans 10:9
deciding and	
standing firm	1 Corinthians 7:37
purposing	2 Corinthians 9:7
comfort	Ephesians 6:22
encouragement	Colossians 2:2
thankfulness	Colossians 3:16
self-condemnation	1 John 3:21

⁴Owen D. Olbricht, *Baptism: New Birth or Empty Ritual?* (Delight, Ark.: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1994), 144.

HOW DOES THE SPIRIT DWELL IN CHRISTIANS?

The major question is not “Does the Spirit dwell in Christians?” That is usually admitted. The question “How does He dwell in us?” is what incites disagreement. Notice these possibilities:

- (1) He dwells through the agency of the Word, but not in person.
- (2) He dwells along with the Word, but not so as to dwell in person.
- (3) He dwells by one’s having the attitude of the Spirit, but not in person.
- (4) He dwells only to the degree one takes on the nature of the Spirit, but not in person.
- (5) He dwells in person in a Christian.

Each of these statements seems to contain an element of truth. When the partial truths are combined, we can begin to see the entire truth. When we are born again through the Word (1 Peter 1:23), we become sons of God and the Spirit is sent into our hearts. He does not dwell separate and apart from the Word, for He will not dwell where the Word has not gone.

The devil seeks to remove the Word that is sown into our hearts so that we will not believe and be saved (Luke 8:12). This must indicate that the Word can enter one’s heart without the Spirit’s entering. The Word can help us to believe (Romans 10:17), and believing can lead us to be baptized to be forgiven (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12; 18:8). Forgiveness, in turn, leads to the receipt of the Spirit. The Word, therefore, is not the agent by which the Spirit dwells in us, for the Word and the Spirit enter the heart at different times. The Word enters our hearts before we are saved, and the Spirit enters after we are forgiven and saved as sons of God.

The Spirit dwells along with the Word. The words of Christ dwell in the Christian’s heart (Colossians 3:16), as does the Spirit. The Word and the Spirit are two separate entities that dwell in the

hearts of Christians.

The Christian is to have the right attitude (Philippians 2:5) in his heart. Right attitudes are the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) because the Spirit has been poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5). Both the right attitude and the Spirit must be in our hearts. A Christlike attitude is the result of the message of the Spirit but is not the Spirit Himself. We will have the fruit of the Spirit if we follow the teachings of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–25). Both the right nature and the Spirit are to be in a Christian. The right nature is the result of following the teaching of the Spirit but is not the Spirit Himself.

In each of these cases, the Spirit’s work is not “either/or” but “both/and.” The Spirit, as well as the Word, dwells in the heart—along with our having the nature and attitude of the Spirit.

First Corinthians 6:19 is an important Scripture in understanding how the Spirit dwells in us. Paul wrote that we are not to join our bodies to harlots because the Spirit is in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:15–19). The figure given is that the “body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you.” The Corinthians were familiar with temples where gods were supposed to dwell. They would have quickly understood by what Paul wrote that instead of the Spirit dwelling in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24), He dwells

THE GIVING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT			
	Baptism of the Holy Spirit	Laying On of the Apostles’ Hands	Indwelling of the Holy Spirit
Who?	Select Few: Apostles & Cornelius (& Paul?) Acts 2; 10	Some First-Century Christians Acts 8:12–18; 19:6	All Christians Acts 2:38; 5:32; Gal. 4:6
How?	Christ Matt. 3:11; Jn. 1:33	Apostles Acts 8:18; 19:6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6	Received From God at Point of Water Baptism Acts 2:38; 5:32
What?	Miraculous Power Acts 2; Acts 10	Limited Miraculous Power 1 Cor. 12:1–10	Not Miraculous; A Pledge of Sonship Eph. 1:12–14
Why?	To Reveal & Confirm God’s Truth Jn. 14:26; 1 Cor. 2:13;	To Sustain the Church Until Completion Of the NT Acts :12–17; Heb. 2:3, 4	To Help & Strengthen Christians Rom. 8:9–11, 13–15, 26, 27
When?	Ceased by A.D. 61–63 Eph. 4:5	Ceased When Apostles & Recipients Died 1 Cor. 13:8–13	Continues Acts 2:38; 5:32; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6

in a temple of flesh, the human body.

We have the Spirit in us if we are sons of God. We become sons of God by being born again by God's Word when, through faith, we are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26, 27). The giving of the Spirit is not like the receiving of the Word of God; it is not something we accept, learn from, or develop within us. God gives us the Spirit (Luke 11:13; Acts 5:32; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; 1 John 3:24). God sends Him into our hearts because we have become His children.

Since the Bible does not tell us how the Spirit dwells in us, we cannot confidently affirm how the Spirit dwells in us without speaking where the Bible does not speak. We do not know how our spirits dwell in us—only that we have physical life because our spirits are in us. Otherwise, we would be dead (James 2:26). Likewise, we have spiritual life because of the Holy Spirit in us. This fact we must accept through faith.

Some have objected that if the Spirit dwells in us, then we have Deity in human flesh—even as Jesus was Deity in human flesh. They claim that this would require others to bow down and worship us. Also, they object that the Spirit is a person who cannot be distributed in little bits and portions in Christians.

Most of those who so object admit that the Holy Spirit was in the prophets and in the apostles. If He was in these men, would it follow according to this logic that the apostles and the prophets should have been worshiped and that the Spirit was divided into little parts? If God can be throughout His universe (Psalm 139:7–12), can He not also—through the Spirit—be in His children? If God is in the remotest part of the sea (v. 9), does this mean that we are to worship the sea? Certainly not.

CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit is given to Christians to dwell in them so that they can live in the world without being overcome by the world. This does not mean that the Spirit gives them directions, feelings, or direct guidance. Neither does it suggest that they can perform signs and wonders as did the apostles and other early Christians who were specially empowered by the Spirit. However, through the non-miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, Christians today can

live victoriously in a world that is influenced by the devil (Ephesians 3:16; 1 John 4:4; 5:19). ■

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in the same way, by being born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5; Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:26, 27; Colossians 2:12, 13).

CONCLUSION

Baptism in the Holy Spirit was administered by Jesus to the apostles in order to prepare them to be His special representatives. In connection with this baptism, Christ revealed His Word to them and endowed them with power that set them apart as His apostles (2 Corinthians 12:12). Giving Gentiles the Holy Spirit baptism which had previously been given only to the apostles proved that Gentiles could become first-class Christians in the kingdom of Christ. The baptism in the Holy Spirit fulfilled God's purpose to elevate the Gentiles and to lay a singular foundation that could unite these two estranged groups—Jews and Gentiles—on an equal standing in the church of Christ (Ephesians 2:11–16). By giving the first Gentiles the same baptism that had been given exclusively to the apostles, God showed that He is impartial. Having fulfilled these purposes, baptism in the Holy Spirit was not needed for anyone else and thus has not been given to anyone else since that time.

Since baptism in the Holy Spirit was for a special purpose, only a few received this baptism. If all Christians received Holy Spirit baptism today, they all should have miraculous gifts like the apostles had. Otherwise, they should have received baptism in the Holy Spirit for the purpose of making known God's special choice of them, as in the case of the first Gentile converts. If these circumstances were required in the New Testament cases, why would they not be required today?

Baptism in the Holy Spirit was not sought, prayed for, or obtained through human effort. God gave it according to His own discretion to serve His own divine purposes. People today who seek this baptism are trying to obtain something which was neither commanded nor promised for them. The fact that the Scriptures reveal only two cases of such a baptism (not including Paul) should cause us to realize that it was not a baptism for all people or for all times. ■