

Coming of the Holy Spirit (<http://www.myfishbites.com/talks-comingofthespirit.php>)

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Holy Spirit has been around since the birth of creation. Genesis 1.1, *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”* Missler reveals the word used for God is ‘Elohim’, which is plural. There was darkness and the Spirit hovered over the waters - Genesis 1.2. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of Hebrew texts) uses the words ‘tohu’ and ‘bohu’, referring to a unique kind of deep darkness and disordering. In Jeremiah 4.3 ‘bohu’ is referred to in the context of judgement.

Through the Old Testament, we learn that different people had the Spirit come on them. In 1 Samuel 10.6-7 we find Samuel speaking to Saul saying, *“The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.”*

In Exodus 31.1-3, God spoke to Moses and said, *“Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God.”*

2 Peter 1.19-21 reminds us that, *“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

Genesis 8.11 – *“When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth.”* We know that the ark of Noah was a very physical representation of what Jesus would do for us spiritually. In a sense the ark was ‘Jesus’ – our place of safety, rescue. But the dove being sent out represented the Holy Spirit bringing the message of Jesus to the world. That same Holy Spirit is in us today.

Peter testified to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament in Acts 1.16 when he said, *“..the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David..”*

Acts 2 – The scene is set

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Significant is the fact that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit took place when the believers were together in one place. This was the case physically but was also the case spiritually – all of their eyes were fixed on and waiting for Jesus as he had commanded them. Their focus was to Jesus and his promises. So must our focus be. We know that Jesus then delivered on his promises. He does the same for us today, but like the disciples we must play our part.

Then the wind came – its origin wasn't natural but heavenly. I wonder how the disciples felt when this violent rushing wind came. (I wonder if they shouted, 'Oy! Peter! Shut the door!') We know that this wind 'came from heaven'. In all we do, our initiation must be heavenly not fleshly. Jesus is the author and finisher, but as Joyce Meyer says, Jesus is under no obligation to finish what he doesn't initiate.

The wind filled the whole house. Surely this is what we want in our churches, in the house of God. We want the Holy Spirit to fill the whole church. We will see that Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus was that they were filled to the fullness of God. We know this filling is a continuous experience and that we must submit to God.

We also see that tongues of fire separated and rested on them. This is very reminiscent of how the dove rested on Jesus at his baptism (Matthew 3.16). These were tongues, because it is with our tongues that we confess Jesus is Lord and that the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached. The tongues were on individuals. Each of us is used by and instructed by God very individually. We all have and need our own individual fire power - provided by God's Holy Spirit.

Finally, we see that people spoke as enabled by the Spirit. We must speak words from God. It is his glory, his message, his church, his Holy Spirit and his Word that matters. So to speak his message, we must hear what he is saying and then act in obedience to him.

The Holy Spirit in the New Testament before Jesus

In the New Testament, we find that there was filling of the Holy Spirit, even before Jesus was born. The angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah in Luke 1.15 and spoke of the forthcoming birth of John the Baptist saying, *“He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.”*

In Luke 1.41 we find that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit in Luke 1.67. All of these Greek words for 'filled' are the same root word, and found in later places in the Bible such as Ephesians 5.18.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit as revealed in John 14 and John 16

John 14.15-18: *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you..."*

John 14.25-26, *"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*

The point here is that we are disciples of Jesus because we obey him. This then leads us to have another Counsellor. Jesus is known as the 'Wonderful Counsellor' which was prophecied by Isaiah in Isaiah 9.6, *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

But Jesus promised he'd send another counsellor that was not him. Jesus would only be with the disciples for a short time, but the counsellor to come would be with them forever and would be the Spirit of truth. We know from John 14.6 that Jesus was also the '*way, the truth and the life.*' Interesting how Jesus said, 'he lives with you and will be in you' – both present and future. Jesus said in John 7.38 that, *"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow within him"*, (quoting Isaiah 44.3). The KJV says *"out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."* The word translated 'belly' here can also mean 'womb' and in fact this is used in Luke 1.41 when describing Mary's womb. Can it be, as some argue, that we are all born with a 'God womb' in us? A place where the Spirit of God is with us, yet does not live in us until we know Jesus? Without the Spirit of God, we would be orphans. I don't want to be an orphan in Christ!

Jesus went on to reveal that the Counsellor would be the Holy Spirit. The Father would send the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus and would (a) teach all things, and (b) remind of everything Jesus said. John 16 further expands on some of the work of the Holy Spirit.

John 16.12-15: *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you."*

Jesus was aware that the disciples could only take so much, so the Spirit would be sent to (c) guide them into all truth. The Holy Spirit does not speak anything except that which he hears and he also (d) reveals things to come. The purpose of the Holy Spirit would be to bring glory to Jesus. Sometimes people say we only need Jesus and while this is true, we need the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus and know God's will.

Introduction to the 'fullness' of the Spirit

God is beyond anything we can think or imagine. So often when we read or hear views on the Holy Spirit, people seem to have things wrapped up neatly. But God is beyond our reasoning and explanations. We can delve into the Bible and do our best to understand what God is saying to us by the Spirit, but we will never know in full.

In 1 Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul makes a very telling statement: *"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."* The truth is that we can only ever know 'in part' when thinking about the Holy Spirit or anything else in the Bible, as we only have the written Word of God and we are only human. The Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance, and reveal as God sees fit, but it can only ever be in part.

When God gave new languages in Acts 2 it was prophetic. God was revealing his message was for all nations – enabling those in Jerusalem to hear God speaking in their own natural tongue. But this was also prophetic. God meets with us individually and uniquely. We cannot put the Holy Spirit in a box and say, 'this is how things should happen'. The Spirit was poured out on individuals in different languages.

The Spirit is given to each of us today as individuals in different ways; unique manifestations; in distinct ways and times. The Spirit is like a flame, burning but no-one can tell how the flames will burn or fan. The Spirit is like oil but we cannot define how the oil will run or where.

John 3.8 lets us know that, *"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."* Just as you cannot bottle the wind or control it, so the Holy Spirit is beyond our control or understanding at times. We don't know where the wind comes from or where the wind is going. So it is with the leading of the Spirit of God.

The ultimate truth about the Holy Spirit is that God works uniquely with each of us and we meet with God in unique ways. I don't believe there is a 'right' way. We need the fullness of God, need to be fully submitted. It doesn't always matter 'how' but it matters that we are filled.

Receiving the Holy Spirit and the debate over the fullness of the Spirit

Sometimes we think that the pinnacle of the Christian life came in the resurrection of Jesus. But if this were true, why would Jesus have sent the Holy Spirit. It is interesting to note that when Peter went on to preach in Acts 2.38-39, he didn't stop with the resurrection. *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

The sequence is: repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Some people see this as being significant as Peter ended with the gift of the Holy Spirit subsequent to the repentance.

It is interesting to link this outpouring and subsequent saving of 3000 people to the account of the evil of the people of Israel in Exodus 32 – the Old Testament 'Feast of Pentecost' (or giving of the law), where 3000 people were killed. How deliberate that the Holy Spirit came at the same time in the New Testament, during the Feast of Pentecost, as with God, there is no coincidence! This was no doubt a reminder that the message of Jesus is to bring life for those who put their trust in him and a warning of destruction for those who don't. Unlike in Genesis 11 with the Tower of Babel where people of different nationalities wanted to be like God, Acts 2 is a contrast. Here, God initiated and gave different languages, also signifying the message of Jesus is for all nations. In Exodus 20, we find that as Moses came down the mountain, there were *"thunderings and the noise of the trumpet and the smoking mountain"* (Exodus 20.18, Amp). In the same way in Acts 2, the Spirit of God descended on the believers with fire.

Is there such a thing as fullness of the Spirit?

We do know that the Holy Spirit can be grieved and we must be challenged to work with God to remove these things from our lives. *Ephesians 4.29-31: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."*

Interestingly, one of the Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit in Isaiah mirrors the words of Paul. Isaiah 63.10 – *"Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them."* How incredible that the people of Israel grieved the Holy Spirit (and remarkable that Isaiah saw this). What was their sin? Rebellion. The Hebrew word can mean rebellion, being bitter, and very rebellious. Let's not grieve the Holy Spirit through rebellion. What Jesus asks his followers to do is to obey him.

Paul also warned the church in Thessalonica (1 Thess 5.19) about not quenching the Holy Spirit – from which it is clear that the Holy Spirit can be quenched. The Amplified says, *"Do not quench (suppress or subdue) the [Holy] Spirit."* It therefore follows logically that there are times where the Holy Spirit can be pushed down (and by inference) times where the Holy Spirit has complete freedom! Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 1.7, "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." So it is impurity and sin that quenches the Holy Spirit.

David Watson points out (*'One In The Spirit'* p67) that we should be continually filled with the Holy Spirit... *Ephesians 5.18 – Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.* The original Greek is the 'present continuous' meaning to go on being filled. (The same imperative use is made in Ephesians 5.2 when Paul speaks about walking in love). The Greek word this comes from is 'pleres' from 'pletho' meaning full. The word is used in other contexts through the NT like 'Jesus full of the Holy Spirit' went into the wilderness (Luke 4.1). In Acts 6.5, 6.8 and 7.55, Stephen is described as being 'full' of the Holy Spirit. Barnabas is similarly described as being 'full' of the Holy Spirit in Acts 11.24.

Some have argued that being filled is simply submission to the Holy Spirit and that the new birth of the Christian is a unique event, without a secondary experience. In this way of seeing things, there is little NT evidence and focus on a second in-filling of the Holy Spirit. (<http://ekkleisia.to/ephesians-519-22-being-filled-by-the-spirit> - accessed 21 June 2010) The onus is on us to 'be filled' and is believed to suggest that we can be full of differing amounts of the Spirit – the question being, not 'do I have the Spirit' but 'does the Spirit have me'? The evidence and result of this filling is seen to be Ephesians 5.18-21:

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

John 20

These more conservative scholars ask questions such as was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 a one-off event; seeing as the believers were all Jewish, how else would they have reached people if God hadn't given them new languages etc. Others argue that the outpourings in Acts 2 served more to achieve wider implications (such as Peter being convinced that Gentiles could also be saved), rather than focusing on the specifics of the giving of the Holy Spirit

These arguments do have some truth. However, we must dig deeper. In John 20, we find Jesus giving the Holy Spirit in some measure to his disciples:

John 20. 5-7, "Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you..."

John 20.19-22, "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Pawson (p66) points out that the definite article is missing, so should be read 'receive holy Spirit.'

Jesus made it clear to his disciples that *"unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."* There is much debate as to whether this was the full giving of the Holy Spirit (after all, Jesus had been resurrected and glorified). Some authors believe that the fullness of the Spirit was yet to come and because Jesus hadn't gone back to heaven, the Spirit hadn't yet been given in its fullness.

In this vein, Pawson (pp67-69) has some insights worth considering. He makes the point that the Spirit couldn't have been fully given yet as Jesus hadn't been glorified, with Peter affirming in Acts 2.33 that Jesus did not receive the promised Spirit to pour out on others until he was *'exalted to the right hand of God.'*

John 7.39 confirms this, *"By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."*

In Luke 24:49. Jesus said, *"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."* Note how Jesus went into the wilderness, *"full of the Holy Spirit."* (Luke 4.1)

Some people regard this as a special time of dispensation. Others say *"the new covenant was effective when Christ died. Thus, it was in effect on resurrection day. Therefore, the disciples could fully experience new covenant life, but this did not preclude subsequent outpourings of the Spirit."* (GMF, accessed 22 June 2010, http://www.network211source.com/index.cfm?page_id=14&itemID=113&synd=true).

Some people even claim that John moved the events recorded in John 20 for his own convenience. This clearly isn't true and is spurious supposition.

Luke re-affirms what Jesus said in Luke 24, by writing in Acts 1.4-5 where Jesus gave them this command: *"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."* Then in verse 8, Jesus continued, *"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

What then did it mean when Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, "receive the Holy Spirit." Was this breath a fulfilment of verses from Ezekiel 37, 38 and Joel 2.

Ezekiel 37.9-10, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' " So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army."

Ezekiel 38.27, "And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

This is also reminiscent of Genesis 2.7 when God formed man, *"the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."* The Hebrew word for breathed is vai-yip-pach which sounds like a breath! God breathed life (his Spirit) into the nostrils of man – making man unique from animals, unlike evolutionists claim. Interesting how Jesus breathed in a similar way on the disciples for them to receive the Holy Spirit. Pawson (pp12-13) points out there are 2 Hebrew words for breath. One is for normal breathing, the other is for strong heavy breathing which you are very aware of (ruach). This is the word used through the Old Testament for the Spirit.

But what was going on in John 20? Pawson (p 69) believes that it was nothing more than a sign of what was to come. In his view, reading anything else into the text is wrong.

Baptised in the Spirit

Let's take a look at the word 'baptised' as this may well give us a key. In John 20, we find that Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit onto his disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. But here, Jesus promises a baptism. The root of the Greek word here 'bapto' means to 'immerse or submerge.' This is used in the New Testament (according to Strongs) for 'ceremonial absolution... especially Christian baptism.' We know that Christian baptism is from the same root word 'bapto'.

When we reach Acts 2, we find that when the Holy Spirit came, it filled the whole house where the disciples were. The Greek word for 'filled' is from the root word, 'pleres' which means 'to make full, to complete.' Does this support the argument that the disciples had received the Holy Spirit, but not in the fullness that could only come when Jesus had returned and sent the Holy Spirit in power?

Is the same is possible for us today – that we can receive the Holy Spirit when we accept Jesus, but that there are further outpourings that God can give to bring more of a ‘fullness’ of the Holy Spirit? Some people argue that 1 Corinthians 12.13 which speaks of ‘one Spirit’ is Biblical evidence against a separate outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

However, in 1 Corinthians 12.13, the Bible merely seems to be saying there is one Holy Spirit – the same Holy Spirit in all believers. It doesn’t say that there is only one experience of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of the receiving of power was to be witnesses across the earth for Jesus. The same calling and purpose exists for us today. If that same purpose exists (which it does), then the same power is needed and is available to us. We must not lose sight of the fact that the giving of the Holy Spirit and the ways he works are not the end – they are a means to the end – to build the Kingdom of God.

Jesus, in Acts 1.8, revealed the giving of the Holy Spirit was to give power to his disciples to be his witnesses. The Holy Spirit always glorifies and points to Jesus, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

In John 3, the Bible records a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Pharisee. In verses 5-8, Jesus says, *“Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”*

There are a number of things to note here. Some people take the phrase ‘born of water and spirit’ to be a single event. Indeed, Jesus affirms that it is the Spirit that renews a man’s spirit. But Pawson (p58) argues that these refer to separate experiences – of both water baptism and of Spirit baptism. In the Greek, there is no definitive article (no ‘the’). So properly read, it is, *“unless he is born of water and Spirit.... But Spirit gives birth to spirit.”* Later on, Jesus refers to ‘the’ Spirit (chapters 14-16). So the experience described in verse 5 is not The Holy Spirit bringing the new birth, it is spirit baptism. Otherwise, Jesus would have said ‘the’ Spirit.

Ezekiel 36.25-28 is a prophecy spoken to the nation of Israel (some of these promises are yet to be completely fulfilled). Do these verses suggest there is a separate experience of becoming a disciple of Jesus by the Spirit, and another experience of infilling by the Spirit?

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

In this prophecy, the Spirit of God seems to be saying that there are 2 stages: firstly, a new heart and a new Spirit will be put in a person, removing the heart of stone for a heart of flesh; secondly, the Spirit will be put into the person to move them to obey God. In both cases, the root word for 'Spirit' is 'ruach' – the visible mighty wind that is used within the Bible. Therefore, due to the use of the phrase 'and' in between verses 26 and 27, it could well be argued that there are 2 separate experiences, both of the Holy Spirit. Those arguing against this, may argue that removing the heart of flesh and a person being moved to want to obey God are not usually separate experiences as the changed heart through the Spirit naturally makes a person want to obey God. Those arguing for the fullness / baptism of the Spirit separately may point to the fact that there are many Christians who have been 'saved' but who do not have that empowering and passionate desire to really live for God.

More of the Holy Spirit? Some thoughts

The Bible also tells us that we can ask for the Holy Spirit. In Luke 11.13, Jesus said this, *“If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”* If we receive the Holy Spirit fully as a Christian, how is it that we can ask God for the Holy Spirit? This seems to suggest something more is possible.

Ephesians 3.19 is part of Paul’s prayer for the church. He asks that they *“would be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”* If we can be filled to the fullness of God, it suggests that we can also not be filled to the fullness and need to do something in order for this to happen. As someone has pointed out, we leak as Christians and need to be re-filled!

James 4.7 sees James speaking about spiritual warfare and resisting the devil. He starts by telling us to, *“submit to God.”* There is little doubt that submission is the key word here. We can’t expect to be full of God unless we submit to God. This also suggests that being filled with the Holy Spirit is an act of will, desire and submission. We can be filled with as much of God as we are prepared to draw close to him.

When Jesus left the wilderness, the Bible tells us that Jesus returned, *“in the power of the Spirit.”* (Luke 14.14) It seems quite clear that the giving of the Holy Spirit in this way led to a power that was not available without this fullness of the Spirit.

The power of agreement

We know from Acts 1.12-15 that there were a number of believers waiting in the upper room (verse 13 says that they ‘went upstairs’). In verse 15, we learn that there were a group numbering about 120 people, male and female (an interesting challenge to those who feel women shouldn’t preach). Verse 14 shows us the power of unity when we learn that *“they all joined together constantly in prayer.”* Jesus had already spoken about the power of agreement in Matthew 18.19-20:

“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

The Greek reveals that this kind of agreement is a deep unity – a calling together by God in unity. It speaks of a picture of an orchestra coming together to play the same tune. The power of the Holy Spirit is in such agreement. Without this agreement, the presence of the Holy Spirit is unable to come so powerfully among God’s people.

Examples of the Holy Spirit in Acts – a pattern?

There appear to be examples in Acts when the Holy Spirit is given as a separate experience from salvation. Unless the Holy Spirit has 'changed' which is impossible as God is unchanging, we are left with some real questions, mainly that it appears that people had accepted the Word of God and been baptised, yet had not been filled with the Holy Spirit. If this was possible then, is it possible now? Or were these people not really saved?

Acts 8.12-17, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."

In Acts 8, we find the evangelist Philip preaching the Gospel and seeing people believe and baptised (for example Simon among many others). When the apostles arrived, however, we find that despite accepting and believing (and being baptised), the believers in Samaria had not had the Holy Spirit 'come upon them'. Therefore, Peter and John both prayed for them and placed hands of them so that they would receive the Holy Spirit (or literally 'get hold of, take' the Spirit). This is also described as the Holy Spirit 'coming upon' the believers. This 'coming upon' the believers is more literally something that is embraced with affection or seized, pressed upon.

Some commentators have argued that this was only for the 'teachers and preachers' in Samaria, yet there is absolutely no evidence of this from the Bible. The Bible simply tells us that 'Samaria had accepted the word of God'. All were therefore prayed for.

Others have argued that this was a special occasion as suddenly believers had formed as a large group in Samaria without the guidance of apostles. Therefore the apostles were bound to go and pray specially. This dispensationalist way of seeing the Bible (as specific and unique time periods with specific and unique dispensations of God / the Holy Spirit) also argues that only the apostles were able to lay hands on the believers in Samaria and is not common to us today. Calvin who also was a dispensationalist, argues that this was not the common grace of the Spirit, but specific gifts "endowed at the beginning of the gospel."

There was a clear manifestation of the Holy Spirit (which the Bible does not describe). We know this because Simon, who had been a sorcerer (Acts 8.9) speaks with questionable motivation, offering the apostles money to also be able to have this power to give the Holy Spirit. Peter rebuked him and Simon repented but clearly something obvious had occurred for Simon to want to have this 'power' (or 'authority, power to act, jurisdiction, right').

Peter Wagner writes (p97), *“The principal issue, in my mind, is that the Holy Spirit came with power, and the barrier between Jews and Samaritans was broken down.”*

This laying on of hands to give the Holy Spirit was not an experience completely unique to the apostles. When we read the account of Saul in Acts 9, we find that it was Ananias who prayed for Paul, fulfilling the purpose of Jesus including being “filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 9.17-20, “Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.”

Acts 10.9 describes Ananias as a ‘disciple’ and not as an ‘apostle’. Yet God spoke to him in a vision and told him to go to Saul and lay hands on him so that Saul would receive his sight back. Ananias did exactly as God had told him (scared as he may well have been!) and told Saul that he would lay hands on him so Saul would “see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Ananias was not an apostle and so it cannot be argued that only the original apostles had the power to lay hands on people and see them receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Once again there was a visible consequence to the filling of the Holy Spirit (the same root word for ‘filled’ that occurs elsewhere above). Paul was baptised, regained strength, spent time with the disciples in Damascus but at once began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God.

Acts 10 gives further proof that the power of God and signs and wonders were certainly not restricted to the apostles and not even to the Jewish believers. We read of how Cornelius, an Italian centurion in the Roman Army was a man of God. Cornelius was visited in a vision by an angel who told him to send for Simon Peter, the apostle. At the same time, Peter had a vision with God speaking to him about not calling something impure that God had made clean. The vision was prophetic for the Gentile believers because at that time, Peter believed only Jews could be saved or only those circumcised. In verse 38 as he’s speaking to the Gentile believers, Peter reveals how God sent Jesus Christ and anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power. If Jesus needed this, how much more do we need this today?! Then we read this:

Acts 10.44-48, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.”

As Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. Peter and the other circumcised believers with him were amazed the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. Then Peter was so overjoyed and convinced they had received the Holy Spirit, he ordered that the Gentiles be baptised in water.

This passage raises some interesting issues. If Cornelius was a believer before Peter arrived, are we to see the giving of the Holy Spirit as a separate experience? Notice also that although the Holy Spirit was given while Peter is speaking, there is no suggestion that Peter is the 'author' of the giving of the Holy Spirit. We know from John 16 that the Father sends the Holy Spirit to bring glory to Jesus.

The question then arises whether Cornelius was actually saved, or whether the giving of the Holy Spirit was a result of Cornelius perhaps being God-fearing before, but not saved until Peter spoke. This is complicated by the fact that in Acts 11.14-17, Peter is recounting the events to the other apostles and believers in Judea. He says (speaking of the vision Cornelius had spoken of):

"As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?"

Let's start by looking at Cornelius and his actions (thanks to PHB, accessed Thu June 24 2010, <http://dunamis2.wordpress.com/cornelius-was-he-already-a-believer/>)

- He is a "devout" man (v.2)
- He is God fearing (v.2)
- He leads his family in worship (v.2)
- He is an abundant giver (v.2)
- He regularly prays to God (v.2)
- He had a vision of an angel of the Lord (v.3)
- He offers prayers that came before God (v.4)

The evidence seems to suggest that Cornelius was already a believer in God, although some argue that Cornelius was simply God-fearing. However, if Cornelius was simply a God-fearing person (like the Jewish rabbis for example), what motivation would he have had for this, considering that he was a Gentile and not under the Jewish law?

Romans 10.10 says, *"For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."*

So we know that believing in God starts in the heart and is evidenced by the mouth and your confession. It is interesting that at no stage do we find Cornelius confessing his faith as a result of Peter being there. He is subsequently baptised, but we also

find this in Acts 9 with Saul. However, nor do we find a previous confession of faith from Cornelius, nor are the believers with Cornelius called 'believers', unlike the Jewish 'believers' are in Acts 10.45.

If we look at Peter's recalling of this in Acts 11, can we learn anything? What was the purpose of Peter going? Was this simply to preach the saving gospel to Cornelius and friends, or was God's purpose to bring salvation to the Gentiles generally and reveal this was his will to Peter and the other believers?

1. We find the baptism in the Holy Spirit came on the Gentiles, as it had on the apostles / believers 'at the beginning'. This seems to be speaking of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 that had come on those in the Upper Room who were already clearly believers in the Holy Spirit. If the experience for Cornelius and friends was the same, do we take it to mean that Cornelius was already a believer and the giving of the Holy Spirit was a separate experience? Or is the evidence of a subsequent baptism into the name of Jesus proof that he was not yet a believer?
2. John the Baptist's followers were baptised by water but followers of Jesus are baptised in the Holy Spirit.
3. Peter speaks of God giving the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles, just as he had to the Jews 'who believed in the Lord Jesus.' Does this mean that the disciples already believed in Jesus before the Holy Spirit was given ('breathed' being a previous event to the giving of the Spirit)? More specifically are we to read that the disciples believed as Jesus breathed his Spirit on them in John 20? If so, does that give support to the argument that Acts 2 was a secondary outpouring of the Spirit? It is interesting to note that in Acts 2, this was a 'baptism' (immersing) in the Holy Spirit, whereas John 20 was Jesus breathing the Spirit onto the disciples. In the same way, Cornelius and others received a baptism in the Holy Spirit.
4. It is clear that the giving of the Holy Spirit was manifested in a similar way to the outpouring on Peter from Acts 2. This is revealed in Acts 10.17. The giving of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament could be clearly seen and heard.

In light of these questions, let's go to Acts 19.1-7:

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive (the) Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Clearly there was something (or someone) missing from these believers who 'believed' but hadn't been baptised. The Bible calls these men in Ephesus 'disciples' (verse 1). There have clearly been baptised (verse 3), although into the baptism of John the Baptist only. They are also called believers (verse 1). Yet they did not know anything about receiving the Holy Spirit.

Pawson (p89) points out that the phrase 'since you believed' (pisteusantes or 'having believed') can mean both 'since' or 'when'. This is significant because both Pentecostal (Holy Spirit comes after faith) and Evangelical (Holy Spirit comes with faith) interpretations are both correct here! As we have expressed elsewhere, it appears that for Paul, believing in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit were separate experiences. Paul was concerned that they be baptised immediately, into the name of Jesus. All Christians old enough to understand need this water baptism. Then Paul placed his hands on them and the Holy Spirit came on them. As with Acts 2, there is a mystery about the Spirit drawing people, the Spirit being essential in faith and the Spirit coming on / into people. Paul affirms this baptism in the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1.13:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

Paul then revealed about the baptism into Jesus' name, prayed for them and the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. The giving of the Holy Spirit is always manifested in signs, wonders, miracles, tongues, shouts of praise and thanks, prophecy and can always be heard and seen. This was the case in the Old Testament and it was the case in the New Testament.

Note that some people believe that normally the giving of the Holy Spirit happens at the time of faith, but that in the cases in Acts 10 and 19 specifically, it happened after the time of faith. (<http://bible.org/question/were-samaritans-believers-they-received-holy-spirit> accessed Thurs June 24 2010).

According to some points of view, the giving of the Spirit later in these 2 instances in Acts 10 and 19 was not the 'normal way' (of one unique experience) but was done to protect the unity of the Spirit. I prefer to think God is beyond understanding!

Ephesians 4.3-6: *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."*

However, the above theory seems to be little more than that! It is more likely that God was showing that he cannot be boxed and while we may want to fit the experience into a neat pattern, God's ways are beyond ours. Maybe God has made the experience of the Spirit deliberately varied – just as he has made each of us varied.

The message that was preached to Cornelius by Peter about Jesus may also be revealing, *“how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”*

Is it significant that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit (one experience) and power (separate experience). Is this Peter speaking of Jesus before and after the temptation experience? Does this apply to us today?

So is the giving of the Holy Spirit a separate experience? The Holy Spirit dwells inside of all believers. In fact, we could argue that there is a “God womb” in every person’s heart waiting to be filled. We know that we are not always completely filled with the Holy Spirit as our sin grieves him. We also know that being filled with the Holy Spirit is also an act of submission and obedience to him.

But some Bible verses and experiences do seem to reveal there can be a separate experience, a separate baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is always visible and definable. If you haven’t asked God to give you this fullness of the Holy Spirit, I would encourage you to do so. For me personally it happened some time after I believed and manifested itself through speaking real wisdom and then speaking in tongues and being much more open to the supernatural. The question is – if we have the fullness of the Spirit simply when we believe, then where is the power? But God is completely sovereign and will deal with each of us uniquely.

Speaking in tongues – some thoughts

In the past, there was a lot of controversy about whether the gift of tongues still existed today. That debate has long since passed in the UK outside of extremely traditional churches, with the large majority of Christians agreeing that it is important and available to all believers. However, not all speak in tongues. No problems.

The Pentecostal movement was quite keen that there was a baptism or fullness of the Holy Spirit and that this always manifested in the receiver speaking in tongues. Without this, you were not baptised in the Holy Spirit. Today, this view is still prevalent although not as dogmatically. However, it is clear that it was only really from the 1900s that the gift of tongues was poured out on the church across the nations. Is this significant? Yes, I believe it is. But speaking in tongues is not the highest gift, nor is speaking in tongues something to be sought as an end in itself.

Cessationist viewpoint countered

In the US, there are those who still pursue what's called the 'cessationist' view. In this view, the gift of tongues was only for the apostles. Others go further and argue that this was not a heavenly language, but was simply an outpouring of a foreign language in order to evangelise (as we've seen in Acts 2). See below under 'Are there tongues of men and separate ones of angels?' The arguments below regarding the cessationist viewpoint are subject to this foreign language / tongues made there.

This mistaken view comes in part from a misrepresentation of 1 Corinthians 12.8. (We must all read and interpret the Bible to find out what it is actually saying, not fit Bible verses to our pre-existing opinions or beliefs!)

“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.”

The cessationist viewpoint is that this proves that tongues will be 'stilled'. But if the interpretation is that 'tongues' is merely the speaking in foreign languages, these have not ceased! If we apply this verse to say that 'tongues' are no longer in existence, we must also argue that prophecy no longer in existence, yet clearly this is not true (Paul affirms prophecy in 1 and 2 Corinthians). Then we must also argue that all knowledge has ended as it's also part of verse 8. But has it? No of course not! If we argue that Paul was talking about foreign languages, why didn't he say this? (In the Greek the word translated 'tongues' can also mean language, but according to Strong's concordance the tongue is '*especially one naturally unacquired*' This same word is used in Acts 10.46 when speaking of the gift of tongues being given to the Gentile believers).

1 Corinthians 12.8 does not give any indication whatsoever that it is speaking about the ending of 'tongues' as a spiritual gift (whether seen as heavenly tongues or 'foreign language' gifts). It is simply saying that where there are prophecies, tongues or knowledge, these will cease. A tongue or a prophecy ends when a person stops speaking; it ends when someone dies; knowledge will one day pass away with time, with death, with the end of the world.

The Bible does not say, 'the gift of tongues has now ceased.' Nor does the Bible give any clue as to when this 'ceasing' will be anyway. All we know is that Paul is talking about a future time.

Nor is this a specific spiritual point about the gift of tongues anyway, but part of a wider argument that Paul is making about love and about a 'then' when we will see 'fully'. When is this 'then'? Obviously it is when we are with Jesus. Why do we know this? Because only when we are in heaven will we be able to see things more completely – only then will we see Jesus face to face.

1 Corinthians 13.9-12, *"For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."*

The argument against this cessationist view has further support in 1 Corinthians 14.22-23 where Paul tells us that speaking in tongues are a sign for believers and not for unbelievers.

"Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?"

If unbelievers came into a church where people were speaking a foreign language, it would seem unlikely they would think that you were 'out of your mind'.

In 1 Corinthians 14.21 quotes Isaiah 28.11-12, *'Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me,' says the Lord.'*

God speaks of people of 'strange tongues' and 'the lips of foreigners'. It appears that these are two separate things, otherwise surely God would have said, 'through the strange tongues of foreigners'. But he speaks of 2 distinct kinds of people. It appears that tongues is not simply about speaking in foreign languages.

Paul goes on in verse 27 to say (speaking of keeping order in the church service), *"If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret."*

If tongues is simply a foreign language, why would someone in a church service speak in a foreign language to say something? Would they not speak in their own language? Nor is Paul talking about 'foreigners' coming into a church service. It's obvious that if someone speaks in a foreign language at a church will need translating. But there is no evidence of these 'foreigners' that would be needed at the church in Corinth. So this must be speaking of 'tongues' as charismatics would see it.

Sadly, some cessationist viewpoints are very disparaging of 'charismatics' and 'pentecostals' especially regarding speaking in tongues and being filled with the Spirit. We should be guarded towards people who are very cynical towards other Christians and their experiences with God (I spoke in tongues while at a fairly conservative Baptist church!!)

We're all on a journey and none of us have the complete truth, as Paul makes very clear in 1 Corinthians 13 – now we only know in part. We must all be very careful not to make religious rules. This includes both traditionalists and charismatics. We must be guided by the Holy Spirit and by love.

1 Corinthians 13.1- "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."

Do I have to speak in tongues?

1 Corinthians 12.27-29, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way."

The most excellent way is love (see 1 Corinthians 13). 1 Corinthians 12 makes it clear that not everyone speaks in tongues. Paul asks, 'does everyone speak in tongues?' Clearly the answer is in the negative. Paul then lets us know this in 1 Corinthians 14.17-19:

"You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue."

(Question – when referring to tongues, Paul describes them (by inference) as words that are not intelligible. It seems to suggest that speaking in tongues would not have necessarily been 'intelligible' to the audience. This could well infer that tongues can be a heavenly tongue, not intelligible to man – unless Paul was saying that the language was unintelligible because it was a foreign language. This seems unlikely).

Back to the question about whether we have to speak in tongues. Paul is clearly pointing out that not everyone in the church speaks in tongues as much as he did. Paul had no problem with speaking in tongues himself. He clearly did a lot. Nor did he have a problem with people in the church speaking in tongues. But he argued it needed an interpretation because all must be done to edify / build up the church, and that prophecy was more valuable to convict unbelievers.

The gift of tongues is available to every believer, but if you don't speak in tongues or don't want to, then that is your personal choice. God works with each of us uniquely. Who are we to tell God how he should and should not work?!

Are there tongues of men and separate ones of angels?

This seems very likely. Wagner (p94) states his agreement with Simon Kistemaker who believes that the speaking of tongues on the day of Pentecost, and the tongues spoken by the Corinthian church were separate. On the Day of Pentecost, those in Jerusalem heard their own languages. In the Corinthian church, the tongues needed interpretation. Many commentators believe these appear to be two different definitions of 'tongues'.

(One argument that could be made here is that they were the same kinds of 'tongues' but that on the Acts 2 occasion they were understood because people around the disciples spoke in those different languages. In the Corinthian church, most people likely spoke the same language so there would be a supernatural need to translate tongues.)

However, we use this not to support the cessationist view, but to say it seems clear that there are different 'tongues' given supernaturally by God – foreign but human tongues and 'angelic' or 'heavenly' languages.

This is further supported by people's personal experiences. Derek Prince once recalled a conference where someone spoke in tongues (I believe in a Chinese language). A Chinese person sat nearby was amazed to hear this, as they understood what was being said. Others have told similar stories. Peter Wagner (p95) recounts a story where an English pastor prayed in tongues for an Arab man. The guy was amazed as the pastor prayed in fluent Iranian and then Ugaritic – an obsolete Iranian language. The pastor said exactly the same things in each language. The Arab man gave his life to Christ.

On the theme of heavenly languages, Wagner (p95) also reports on a social study by professional linguists of people speaking in tongues where the conclusion was 'that the speech they examined follow(ed) no known human language structure, ancient or modern'.

It is very possible and indeed completely likely that there are 'human' and 'heavenly' languages given by God. Beyond this, experience has shown that like any 'language', we can grow in the language God gives. Other people have the ability to speak in more than one language given by God.

Acts 2 – The Main Event

Acts 2.1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. *2* Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. *3* They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. *4* All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. *6* When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. *7* Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? *8* Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? *9* Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, *10* Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome *11* (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" *12* Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. *15* These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! *16* No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20 The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21 And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Huge questions rage about this part of the Bible. The main arguments revolve around two major areas. Firstly, can the Holy Spirit be given as a secondary experience to the work of the Holy Spirit in saving people? Secondly, are these gifts and experiences of the Holy Spirit available to all believers, or were they given solely to apostles?

We've looked long and hard at whether the Holy Spirit can be given 'in fullness' or in separate experiences and the clear answer is yes. This is true in my experience, in my own personal life and the Bible makes it abundantly clear.

In one sense, the phrase 'tongues' is not quite accurate or complete. The Greek word is from the word 'glossolalia' meaning a language, complete with syntax and grammar (Pawson p 74). It also seems highly likely that this same experience of prophesying was shared by those 3000 who came to faith in the light of what Peter said. In verse 38, he revealed to those listening that this gift of the Holy Spirit would be for them too.

Were these gifts of the Spirit for then, or just the apostles?

Clearly, the giving of tongues and gifts of the Spirit in this way was not just to these 12 disciples (as some commentators wrongly believe). Apart from the evidence of millions of people having these gifts today, Acts 2.4 says that "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit enabled them." The Greek word for 'all' here in Acts 2.4 means, "all / every / all manner of / all things".

This Greek word does not suggest for one moment that it was in some way limited to the apostles. It suggests quite the opposite – that the gift was available for all. Paul, writing to the Corinthian church writes (without any hint of this being abnormal) shows that the gifts of tongues and prophecy were both in operation. Not everyone spoke in tongues, but people did. Paul himself clearly spoke in tongues (1 Corinthians 14.8): *"I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you."* And so did others:

1 Corinthians 14. 4-5, *"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified."*

One commentator has argued that the only sign (unique to the apostles) given was this giving of tongues. But this seems contrary to the text that in verse 2 reveals that a mighty wind filled the room and in verse 3 that tongues of fire separated and then rested on them. This seems pretty supernatural and a clear sign of the Holy Spirit.

(In Isaiah 11 we read prophetic words about the coming King, Yeshua. In verse 2, it says, *"The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him."* This was fulfilled starting in John 1.32 when John states, *"I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him (Jesus)."* The fact that the Spirit of God was poured out and then rested on the disciples in Acts 2 is a direct parallel of how the Spirit of God rested and remained on Jesus. Our challenge is to live so that the Spirit remains resting on us! Pawson (p50) notes how the Spirit rested on Jesus after he came up out of the water of baptism. My personal testimony was the opposite way round!)

Acts 2.13 lets us know that people were making fun of the disciples saying that they were drunk. Considering people don't think others are drunk if they speak in different languages, it sounds like the text is accurate – that the disciples were acting a bit like they were drunk. Not on wine as Paul warns – but on the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 3.16, John spoke of the Holy Spirit coming like a fire saying, *"I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*

In addition, part of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 was in dreams and visions, but this went beyond the 12 apostles present on the Day of Pentecost. We know that Paul had dreams and visions. In fact, Jesus spoke to him in a vision to reveal himself as Messiah in Acts 9. In Acts 16, Paul had a vision of the man in Macedonia calling him. Acts 16.9, *“During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”*

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul speaks about visions and revelations and speaks of ‘someone’ he knew who has a vision of heaven. This person was clearly Paul himself as verse 7 tells us that he was given a thorn in his flesh to stop him becoming prideful about these revelations!

In Acts 8, we find the remarkable story of Philip the Evangelist (not Philip the apostle.) We find that remarkable things happened through Philip with miracles, deliverance from demons, and huge levels of healing. Acts 8.4-8:

“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city.”

Then, not only did an angel appear to him (verse 26 - *Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”*), we find that the Spirit spoke to him directly (verse 29 – *The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it’*). We then find Philip supernaturally whisked off! Verse 39 tells us that as the Ethiopian eunuch came up out of the water of baptism, *“the Spirit suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again...”*

Clearly the supernatural was not solely the domain of the apostles, even within Acts. These same gifts are available to us today. In fact, not only are they available, they are essential tools in empowering the church and overcoming the darkness.

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