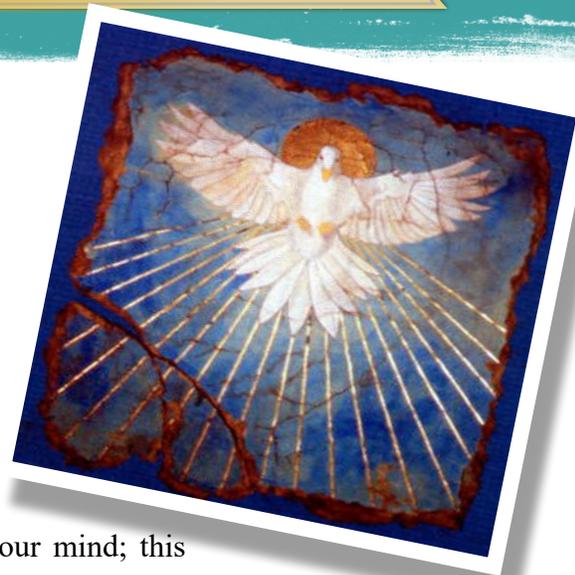


SPIRITUAL GIFTS & FRUIT

PART 1

THE WONDERS OF PENTECOST

“ for John truly baptized with water,
but you shall be baptized with the
Holy Spirit not many days from now.”
Acts 1:5 NKJV



Review of Study 17

After being saved, a person is *in Christ* and declared righteous by God, but there will be struggles with the old sin nature. So God provides the Holy Spirit, empowering us from within and changing the desires of our mind; this enables us to overcome temptation. Learning how to deal with sin and how the Lord works in the transformation process to remove strongholds is a lifelong process of growing spiritually. Marriage between homosexuals is not biblical, so God asks homosexuals to do the same thing He requires of *all* single people. Whether homosexual or heterosexual, we all need to keep a pure mind, avoiding the things that harm a clean thought-life. As for believers, we are instructed, "**Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one**" (Col. 4:6). This verse applies to our interactions with all people, and requires that we assure our speech comes from a heart of grace, seasoned with salt, and spoken with wisdom and knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Few topics are of more interest to Bible believers than spiritual gifts: what are they, why do/did they exist, how do you get them, how do I know my gift(s), what gifts are in effect today? This great interest is met with a corresponding diversity of opinion as to what the Bible teaches on this topic. Unfortunately, religious games and personal wishes seem to hold more sway on this matter than does sound biblical interpretation. Thus, some churches believe you must have certain gifts as proof you are a Christian, some say only certain gifts exist today, others are not sure what to believe so they come up with a strange brew of beliefs. Christian churches,

organizations, and publications offer a confusing mix of beliefs, so it is hard for a person to know what to believe. Adult Studies 18-22 are designed to explore the Word and present a clear explanation of spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit.

As you read the following studies with an open mind, may the Lord enable the Word to speak to your heart in a special way. Some of what is said will seem out of line, rather weird, or just plain wrong. Yet, as you meditate on these studies, you will most likely come to see the presentation is biblically based. *Grace 4 You* has no ties

to organizations or teachings that require us to promote a certain doctrine on this topic; we are free to be open and honest. In fact, what you will learn is very much in accord with what you observe in real life. You may be surprised at the conclusion, but upon further reflection,

you will realize the teachings truly reflect what occurs in Christian life.

Discuss: How important do you think spiritual gifts are today?

BIBLE TRUTH

God performed miracles, showed wonders, and presented special signs throughout the Bible. However, our topic is not so much about God performing such acts, obviously He can and has, but about human beings being empowered by God to display such powers. We will start our study on the Day of Pentecost, since that is when humans were especially empowered by God to act as His intermediaries to perform miracles and special signs. The events of that period often fill our minds with wonder.

Pentecostal Promise

Pentecost was a yearly festival for the children of Israel after leaving Egypt; it occurred 50 days (*pente* means five) after the Passover. The specific Pentecost we will consider occurred 50 days after Christ's resurrection (which was on the Passover). On the day of Pentecost¹, all believers were given spiritual gifts in a remarkable manner. The events of Pentecost were prophesied by Christ after His resurrection, "**And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'You have heard from Me: for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now ... But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' "** (Acts 1:4-8).

Jesus Christ instructed the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for God to fulfill His promise to them. Jesus explained to the believers that the Holy Spirit would

come upon them, and then they would become witnesses for Him to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. The Promise of the Father was that they would receive special power from the Holy Spirit and thus become witnesses of Him to the ends of the earth. The Promise of the Father concerning Pentecost can be summarized in this way:

- God would pour out His Spirit, " **'And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord God' "** (Ezek. 39:29).
- The Spirit would be poured out on *all* believers, male and female, bond and free (the term "all flesh," as we will see later, means all Jewish believers)
- As a result of the Spirit being poured out, the recipients would have special miraculous power and be witnesses to the entire world.

What a wonderful promise, how incredibly God was working. These humble disciples would become the very means by which the truth of Jesus Christ would be taken to the rest of the world. They were simple men and women, with little education, now they realized how they could do this overwhelming job. They could do it because God was going to give them special powers, through His Spirit. After all the centuries of struggle, after all the disappointment and suffering, after all the patient endurance and waiting, finally there was an end in sight. The consummation of the ages was at hand, God was about to fulfill His promises to them and bring human history (as we know it) to an end. The long promised kingdom of heaven on earth was in view. With eager hearts, they must have been overwhelmed with

¹ Unless otherwise noted, references to Pentecost in these studies will refer to the specific Pentecost of Acts 2.

excitement as they waited for those 50 days. They must have been filled with a mixture of excitement and apprehension, not knowing exactly what this all meant; however, it had to be of great comfort to know the Lord was sending the Holy Spirit to be with them, and to prepare them for His return in power and glory.

In Acts 1:4-8, Jesus explained the coming events in ways that were very different, but understandable. God would baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17), and He contrasts this baptism with that of John, who's baptism was with water. So Jesus was saying the Father would be the baptizer (the doer), the believer would be the baptizee (person receiving the baptism), and the Holy Spirit was "what" would be poured upon them. From Adult Study 5, *What It Means to Be In Christ — The Role of Spiritual Baptism*, we know that baptism always accomplishes one main purpose, that is, it identifies one thing with another. The Promise was that God, through Christ, would pour out the Holy Spirit on believers and they would then be identified with His supernatural power.

Pentecostal Fulfillment

Jesus' words were turned into action, fulfilling the Father's promise. **"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, 'Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 'And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 'Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia,**

Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ... both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God' " (Acts 2:1-11).

The disciples did as Jesus instructed and stayed in Jerusalem. All of a sudden there was the sound of a tremendous wind (the Spirit is often associated with the wind, breath...) and they saw divided tongues as of fire. The term "divided tongues" seems to represent many tongues (diverse languages) which appeared as fire (visible evidence of the Spirit). One fire sat on each person as he or she was filled with the Holy Spirit. Being filled does not mean the Spirit was *within* them, but that they were completely under the control of the Spirit and filled with His power. The Spirit's actual location was on the outside of the person, upon them, as a fire dancing on their heads. Recall, Jesus said He would send the Comforter, the One called *alongside*; but alongside is not within (Jn. 14:16). As soon as they were under the power of the Spirit, they began to speak in "other" tongues, that is, in unknown languages to the speakers. However, the next verse makes it clear there were Jews there, from all over the Roman world for the feast of Pentecost, and they recognized the various tongues as being their native languages.

Discuss: The Spirit's supernatural power was obvious to everyone and served a specific purpose. Discuss how the gift of tongues enabled believers to evangelize the world.

The sentence, **"And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven,"** is very explicit. There were devout Jews there, and proselytes (gentile converts to Judaism, but considered as Jews); there were no gentiles, per se. The devout Jewish men and proselytes that were present, were from every nation under heaven (meaning every nation in the Roman world, driven there as a result of the dispersion). The men who heard this were amazed and dumbfounded, saying, **"...we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."** How could these simple Galileans speak their languages? The disciples were

speaking an language unknown to themselves, but it was a *known language* to those who heard it. They were not speaking nonsense words or gibberish; they were speaking a real language, as verified by men from other countries who spoke the various languages. All this was according to God's design, and we learn several very important items related to spiritual gifts:

- each believer spoke a *known language*, as verified by people from around the world,
- the recipients of the gift did not study, prepare, or take a survey to find out what gift they had; the gift was obvious, instantaneous, and completely ready for immediate use,
- the believers did not beg or pray for a gift; God gave it to them as He wished,
- tongues were a sign from God and it resulted in praise for His wonderful works, and
- the gift of tongues immediately prepared the disciples to be witnesses for Him, that is, to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel," since they could speak the languages of the various nations.

Discuss: Tongues refer to known languages, not babbling or nonsensical talking. The disciples did not study or prepare for the gift from God; the gift was complete and perfect as given.

Of course, the Pentecostal event was such a new thing that some mocked and said the disciples were full of new wine. Peter came to their defense and said they were not drunk, but what was happening was a fulfillment of Joel's prophesy. What Peter said next seems like he may have made a mistake. However, the Bible neither suggests Peter was wrong, nor corrects his words, so it is obvious he was correct. Here is what Peter said: "**For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only the third hour of the day.* 'But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: '*And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on my menservants and on My***

maidservants I will pour of My Sprit in those days; And they shall prophesy' " (Acts 2:15-18).

Peter Was Right

The reason people wonder if Peter was wrong, is his statement concerning Pentecost being "in the last days." If Peter were correct, and Pentecost were in the last days, then why has the world continued for another 2000 years? Since human history has continued for so long, many people contend Pentecost was the start of something new, not the last days. If Pentecost were in the last days, that means it was the end of some age or dispensation; however, today most teachers and pastors believe the Church began at Pentecost². The term "last days" cannot be the start of something new; it has to refer to the end of something. Thus, we have a real dilemma here: how could Peter be right, that is, how is it possible that Pentecost was in the last days and then history just continued on for another 2000 years?

Let's look at what Peter continues to say: "***I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved'*** " (Acts 2:19-21).

At this point you may be wondering why this issue about Peter is being discuss when this study is about Spiritual gifts. It turns out that Peter's words have a significant bearing on understanding spiritual gifts, so the discussion is essential at this time. Continuing, the solution to the dilemma noted above is quite simple, and biblical. Peter was correct about the last days, Israel was indeed entering into the last days just as Joel predicted. The last days of Israel's program (Law) are composed of the Tribulation and Day of the Lord. The Tribulation should have occurred shortly after Pentecost, as Joel had prophesied, if history had gone on uninterrupted. The

² The Church of today is referred to by various terms; all have some difference in meaning, but conveying a similar idea. The terms used for the Church of today (or the age in which it occurs) are: Age of Grace, Church Age, Body of Christ, and Dispensation of Grace.

wonders in heaven and signs in the earth beneath, noted above, would have occurred in the last days, during the awesome Day of the Lord; but they never materialized. What happened?

God, in His mercy, intervened and prevented the last days from continuing. God interrupted Joel's prophecy, right between Acts 2:18 and 2:19. Thus, what happened at Pentecost was in exact accordance with Acts 2 through verse 18, then came God's interruption. This between-verses interruption is not unusual in the Bible, sometimes the interruption occurs within a verse. For example in Isaiah 9:6, the prophecy of Christ is interrupted in mid-verse by essentially the same 2000 years, our age. The interruption that occurred at Pentecost and in Isaiah continues to this day; when the interruption is over world history will resume right where it was interrupted. Thus, when our age (the interrupter) is over, the last days will begin again with God shows wonders in the heavens above and signs on earth beneath. The interruption is what is preventing the completion of Joel's prophecy.

Discuss: The fact that Peter was correct is not well understood in Christendom, the general view is that Peter was wrong. Discuss the interruption in Joel's prophecy.

The Great Interruption

God's interruption of history occurred when He introduced a totally new, unprophesied, age into human history. This new age is what caused the 2000 year gap between Peter's "last days" and today. The Age of Grace (AOG), the age in which we live, is that age. The Age of Grace was God's carefully kept secret, and when that age was unveiled by God, and put into action, it caused the interruption. Adult Study 13, *Grace—Experiencing It*, explains the secret age causing the interruption this way,

"God had to keep the AOG a secret, not to deceive or deprive us, but to ensure His eternal plan would work. If His secret were known ahead of time, the plan would not work. Our fate and the fate of the world depended upon that secret being kept—at all costs. Had the secret (called the *mystery* in the Bible) been found out ahead of time, the powers of darkness would not have crucified Christ; without His death no one could ever be saved. **'But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory'** (1 Cor. 2:7-8). The mystery (secret) was not that Christ had to die: that was well prophesied. The secret was God had a whole new, unprophesied, Age of Grace in His plan."

As far as prophecy is concerned, the biblical time clock has stopped, as God displays His grace today. Once our secret age ends, the biblical time clock will start again and prophecy will take off just where it was interrupted. Not understanding this interruption is what causes confusion about spiritual gifts. The gifts began in earnest at Pentecost, which is connected to the end of the previous age, not the start of the Age of Grace. Thus, the spiritual gifts of Pentecost had a specific purpose for the end of the Jewish (Law) Age. Later in the Bible, we learn the gifts had a continuing purpose for the new Age of Grace; but, that was not what Peter had in mind, because he had no clue about the Age of Grace at that time.

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In Acts 2, Pentecost is connected
to the end of the previous age, not the
start of the Age of Grace.
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PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS

From what we have learned so far, we can see how this study on spiritual gifts can help shape our understanding of the Bible. The gift of tongues was a gift of a real language being used somewhere in the world at the time

the gift was given; thus, we should not fall into a common misunderstanding that tongues or prayer were (or are) in a totally unknown language. God does not play games by giving someone a tongue no one speaks

or that does not exist (like the languages that died out in the Noachian flood). The purpose of the gifts was to glorify God, and to enable the recipients to be witnesses (immediately and without study) to those from foreign nations. Our understanding of the Scripture is enhanced when we understand those in attendance at Pentecost were followers of the Jewish Law, from all around the Roman world. Gentiles were not there for the start of a new age, which would be primarily Gentile in nature. Those who believe Pentecost was the start of a new age (the Church of today), try to put Gentiles there to make the point the Church was being born. Since only Jews/proselytes were there, it is clear this was the end of the Law Age.

Discuss: The Bible says Pentecost occurred in the last days; the last days of a law-based, Jewish program. Pentecost did not occur in the "first days" of the Age of Grace, which is primarily Gentile in nature.

Having a spiritual gift was exciting enough, considering the miraculous powers, but think of the attention and fame such a gift brought. The prime fascination today with spiritual gifts often relates to the miraculous powers and the sense of godliness the gifts supposedly portend. People want to be special in some way and believe a spiritual gift is proof of their spirituality and closeness to God. However, gifts were for the work of the Lord and to glorify God, never to bring attention to an individual.

Peter and Joel mention several gifts: tongues, prophecy, visions, and dreams. In Mark 16:17-18 several more gifts are mentioned as *signs* of those who believe. A term used today is "sign gifts," which generally refer to those gifts which provided something that could be seen, heard, experienced, or proven. There were two basic groups of Jewish people: those who were religious but unbelievers, and true believers. The sign gifts were a sign to each group. Tongues were a sign to the unbelievers in Israel to wake up and accept Christ as the longed for Messiah: **"Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers...."** (1 Cor. 14:22a). Prophecy was the ability to expound the truth of God

(exhortation) in a clear manner or to foresee what would happen in the future. Prophecy was for those who did believe, **"...but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe"** (1 Cor. 14:22b). A prophet could tell believers the new things God was doing, and inform them of future events. Things were going to be changing rapidly, in the last days, so they needed prophets. Since prophecy allowed believers to be told of future events before they happened, it was a sign gift because any prophecy could be examined over a short period of time to prove its validity. Visions and dreams would be much like the prophecy, that is, the ability to foresee events and explain them in a clear and reliable manner.

The gifts we have discussed so far were designed to assist the nation of Israel during the last days; in addition, the gifts had a distinct role in the early Church. When the Age of Grace ends, biblical prophecy will resume and human history will again enter the last days (the sign gifts may come into effect again, or they may have already fulfilled their purpose for those days). The coming last days will end human history as we know it; they will include the seven-year Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. Immediately after the Tribulation (Matt. 24:29), there will be wonders and signs in heaven and earth of Christ's return at the end of the Day of the Lord: ***"I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."*** (Acts 2:19-20).

A major factor in understanding the gifts issue is rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), that is, interpreting the Bible in a correct manner. Rightly divided, the Word helps us understanding that God's mystery program interrupted the last days. Thus, we can understand how the Bible and human history are in total agreement, that is, the 2000 year gap really does makes sense.

SUMMARY

The promise of the Father was that the believers would receive special power from the Holy Spirit and thus become witnesses of His to the end of the earth. This occurred at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and gave them spiritual gifts. The disciples began speaking in tongues, unknown languages to the speakers, but *known languages* to those who heard it. They were not speaking nonsense words or gibberish; they were speaking a real language as verified by men from other countries who spoke the various languages. The recipients of the gift did not study, prepare, or take a survey to find out what gift they had; the gift was obvious, instantaneous, and completely ready for immediate use. Peter boldly proclaimed that Pentecost was in the last days, that is, that Israel was entering into

the last days as Joel had predicted. That meant they were just a heart-beat away from the beginning of the Tribulation. Thankfully, God's interrupted biblical prophecy by introducing a totally new, unprophesied age. The new age was the Age of Grace, in which we live. Our age interrupted biblical history and caused the 2000 year gap between Peter's "last days" and today. The purpose of the gifts was to glorify God and to enable the recipient to be a witness (immediately and without study) to those in foreign nations. What a marvelous way to prepare believers to go to all nations teaching the good news of Jesus Christ.

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