
"THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

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QUESTIONS:

- 1) What did Jesus tell Peter to promise men if they would obey the gospel?
- 2) Does Mk 16:17-20 teach miracles are possible for baptized believers today?
- 3) How many times does the expression "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" occur in the scriptures?
- 4) According to Acts 2:33, what did Jesus pour out on the disciples?
- 5) A passage which seems to be universal in its application can be limited by ... (**what**)?
- 6) What must happen first before a promise can be received?
- 7) How many of the baptized believers in Acts 19:6 received the laying on of apostolic hands?
- 8) There are passages which teach that miracles would end in the 1st century. Are there any passages teaching the same thing about baptism?

INTRODUCTION

Acts 2:37-39

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹ "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Our desire in this study is to focus in on the phrase "*gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

- Exactly what is it?
- How was it received?
- What did it do for Christians?
- Is this gift still available for Christians today?

MARK 16

(A Parallel Passage)

In Acts 2 Peter is the preacher. He had an assignment:

- He is preaching what Jesus told him to preach.
- He is promising ...

Mark 16:15-18

¹⁵ And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

¹⁶ "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

¹⁷ "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

¹⁸ "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Here was Peter's assignment:

- He was to **preach** the Gospel and baptize so men can be saved.
- He was to **promise** miraculous signs would follow "them that believe."

The second half of this passage is difficult:

- Was Jesus promising miraculous power to all believers?
- If He was, why don't all believers today have these powers?

There are three possible ways of looking at this.

INTERPRETATION #1

Interpretation #1: Jesus was promising miracles only to the apostles.

Mark 16:15-17

¹⁵ And [Jesus] said to THEM ...

¹⁶ HE who believes ...

¹⁷ And these signs will follow THOSE who believe ...

Two parts to this reasoning:

- Supposedly the plural word "them" cannot refer back and include the singular word "he" that believes.
- The only thing "them" (v17) can refer to is the "them" (apostles) (v15).

If this is true, then only the apostles would have received these miraculous abilities and when they died, these gifts would have died with them.

Three problems with this argument:

FIRST: The plural pronoun "them" can refer something besides the "them" (apostles) of v15.

Mark 16:15

¹⁵ And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to **every creature.**

¹⁷ And these signs will follow **those** [of every creature – v15] **who believe** ...

It is wrong to argue that grammatically, only the apostles could possibly be under consideration.

SECOND: If Jesus was speaking only to His apostles, He would have said: "***These signs will follow YOU who believe ...***"

THIRD: Since more than just the apostles performed miracles, it's safe to say Jesus was speaking of more than just the apostles in Mk 16:17!

INTERPRETATION #2

Interpretation #2: *Jesus was promising miracles to believers and miracles are still possible.*

The problem is: This isolates the text from all other passages that speak about miracles.

One of the greatest mistakes made in Bible study is to read a single passage and draw conclusions without hearing any other passage.

ILL: Some read Jn 3:16 and without reading any other passage and conclude faith-only will save.

Some do this with Mk 16. They read this passage as if there was no another passage in the entire Bible about:

- The nature
- The purpose
- The duration of miracles

Mk 16 is not the final word on miracles. All this passage does is state a fact: **Miracles shall follow baptized believers!**

It does not say:

- How long miracles would continue.
- How men would receive miracles.
- When men would receive these miracles (immediately after baptism?).
- Would there be any other conditions besides baptism?
- Would every single Christian possess miracles?
- Would every Christian possess the same powers?

To learn the answers to all of these questions we must turn elsewhere. We must be willing to accept the testimony of all passages before drawing any final conclusions.

All Mk 16 does is state a fact: ***Miraculous signs will follow believers!***

- In Acts 8:18 we learn ***how + when*** men received miraculous power.
- In 1 Cor 12:29-30 we learn not all Christians possessed the same powers.
- In 1 Cor 13 we learn when these ***miracles would end***.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

⁸ Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

Before all the NT scriptures were completely revealed Paul said he and the other apostles "*knew in part and prophesied in part.*" No one knew the entire story of God's will.

But "*when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*" The NT scriptures are the "*perfect thing*" under consideration.

James 1:25

²⁵ But he who looks into **the perfect law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

By taking all of these passages together we get the whole story about miracles. If we isolate any one passage and ignore the rest, we lose the true meaning of the text.

INTERPRETATION #3

Interpretation #3: Jesus was promising miracles to believers BUT miracles are not possible today.

You cannot read Mk 16 alone and reach this conclusion. You must be willing to read and accept other passages to reach this conclusion, but that's OK: This is what the Lord intended.

NOTE: If the Lord had intended that Mk 16:17 be the final word on miracles, He would have never written anything else about the subject!

- v15 – Preach the gospel to every creature."
- v17 – Promise: "These signs will follow those [of every creature] who believe."

LOOKING AT ACTS 2

When we come to Acts 2:38 there is a parallel with Mk 16:16-18.

Mark 16	Acts 2
(1) Believe + Baptized = Saved	(1) Repent + Baptized = Saved
(2) Miraculous Power	(2) The "gift of the Spirit"

When Peter promised the *"gift of the Spirit,"* he was promising the same thing Jesus promised in Mk 16:17.

Q: Do the Scriptures ever use the expression *"gift of the Spirit"* to describe miraculous power?

A: Yes. The phrase *"gift of the Spirit"* occurs only twice in the NT and in this second reference it clearly refers to miraculous power:

Acts 10:44-46

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because **the gift of the Holy Spirit** had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

⁴⁶ **For they heard them speak with tongues** and magnify God. ...

So ... *"gift of the Spirit"* can indeed refer to miraculous power.

Milton Terry:

*"When a writer has treated a given subject in different parts of his writings ... it is both justice to the [writer], and important in interpretation, to ... compare all that is written. **The obscure or doubtful** passages are to be explained by what is plain and simple."* (Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 186).

If we follow this line of reasoning, we must say:

The *"gift of the Spirit"* in Acts 10:45 (plain) should help explain the meaning of Acts 2:38 (obscure).

Therefore: ***"Gift of the Spirit" = miraculous power.***

TESTING THE DEFINITION

We want to focus on the context of Acts 2 and see if the idea of miraculous power fits the chapter.

Acts 1

The apostles were given a promise.

Acts 1:4

⁴ And being assembled together with them, [Jesus] commanded [the apostles] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for **the Promise of the Father**, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;

"the Promise of the Father" – a reference to miraculous power. Notice:

Acts 1

⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁸ 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."

NOTE: Miraculous power is being associated with "*the promise of the Father.*" This will be very important when we get to Acts 2:38-39. Make a mental note.

Acts 2:1-4

We see this wonderful event taking place.

Acts 2:5-13

Unbelievers flocked into the street to discover the source of commotion they had heard. They witnessed the disciples speaking miraculously in various languages.

An important question is asked:

Acts 2:12

¹² So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could **this** mean?"

Take note of the pronoun "**this**" – "Whatever could **this** mean?"

Acts 2:14-21

Peter became the spokesman. He answers the question:

Acts 2:16-18

¹⁶ "But **this** is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ '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.

¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

In other words, "**this**" display of miraculous power was exactly what God had "*promised*" thru the prophets!

Look carefully now at these groups mentioned by Joel:

- Pour out Spirit on **all flesh** (Jews & Gentiles – **no race discrimination**)
- Sons & Daughters (**no sex discrimination**)
- Young & Old (**no age discrimination**)
- Servants & Handmaids (**no social discrimination**)

(Remember groups when we look at v39.)

Acts 2:22-36

Peter now turns his attention to preaching the Gospel. He focuses on Jesus' resurrection, proving Jesus is not dead, but a living Savior.

He offers three forms of proof that Jesus resurrected:

v25-31: OT Scriptures

v32: Apostles

v33: Miracles

Acts 2:33

³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father **the promise of the Holy Spirit**, He poured out **this** which you now see and hear.

Again, focus on the pronoun "**this**." (Remember, in v12, "Whatever could **this** mean?")

Jesus is the One who has shed forth this power of the Holy Spirit. If He were still dead, He couldn't do "**this**."

According to v33: what Jesus received from the Father he poured out on the disciples.

- 1) **What did Jesus receive from the Father?** The "*promise of the Holy Spirit*."
- 2) **What did Jesus pour out on the disciples?** The very thing He received from the Father.

He poured out the promised Spirit which He received from the Father.

Remember this! This is the second time miraculous power is called the "**promise of the Holy Spirit**."

(This will be very important when we look at v39).

Acts 2:37-38

Having heard this sermon, many of the Jews believed and asked what they must do to be saved.

Acts 2:38

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 10

We learned earlier from Acts 10 that this phrase "*gift of the Spirit*" can mean miraculous power given by the Spirit.

Let's go back and reread that passage:

Acts 10:45-46

⁴⁵ ... **the gift of the Holy Spirit** had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

⁴⁶ **For they heard them speak with tongues** and magnify God. ...

"gift of the Spirit" ⇒ miraculous power.

Later Peter explained to the Jewish brethren what happened:

Acts 11:15-17

¹⁵ "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at **the beginning** [Pentecost – Acts 2].

¹⁶ "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be **baptized with the Holy Spirit.**'

¹⁷ "If therefore God gave them **the same gift** as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

"same gift" (ἴσος) – "*equivalent gift*" (cf. Mt 20:12; Jn 5:18).

Think carefully:

- What the Gentiles received was equivalent to what the Jews received on Pentecost – "in the beginning."
- What the Gentiles received was called the "gift of the Holy Spirit."
- That gift was miraculous power.

Hence, when we read:

Acts 2:4

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ...

We could scripturally say:

Acts 2:4

⁴ And they were all filled with **the gift of the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

When Peter tells the people to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and they too will receive the "*gift of the Spirit*" is there any doubt what he had reference to?

He was referring to the miraculous power of the Spirit which the apostles themselves received just moments earlier!

Acts 2:39

Acts 2:39

³⁹ "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

"the promise" – Miraculous power has already been called "*the promise of the Father*" (Acts 1:4) and "*the promise of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:33).

Compare Joel's prophecy with what Peter is saying here in v39:

JOEL	PETER
Pour out my Spirit on <i>all flesh</i> (Jews & Gentiles)	Promise to you and your children and to all afar off (<i>Jews & Gentiles</i>)
Sons & Daughters (<i>sex</i>) Young & Old (<i>age</i>) Servants & Handmaids (<i>social</i>)	Even as many as the Lord calls (<i>no discrimination</i>)

Peter was demonstrating and applying what Joel's prophecy had said.

- He was not promising miraculous powers to every Christian of every age.
- He was not promising miracles would continue forever.
- He was not saying people would immediately receive this gift upon baptism.
- He does not explain how people would receive this gift.

To learn the answers to all these questions we must look to other passages.

No one today has ever received this "*gift of Spirit*" – and no one living today ever will. This was miraculous power promised to believers of 1st century.

OBJECTION #1

OBJECTION #1: *How can we say repentance and baptism still apply today?*

The answer to this objection is the same as our reply to Mk 16. The passages are parallel:

Mark 16	Acts 2
(1) The terms of salvation and	(1) The terms of salvation and
(2) The promise of power from the Holy Spirit	(2) The promise of power from the Holy Spirit

If we can see that the terms of salvation in Mk 16 still apply even though the miracles don't we should be able to see the same thing in Acts 2.

Keep in mind Mk 16 and Acts 2 are not the final word on miracles. Other passages must be considered!

Other passages teach miracles would come to an end. But no passage teaches that repentance and baptism would come to an end!

This is why the terms of salvation still apply, but the miracles have ceased!

OBJECTION #2

OBJECTION #2: *The promise of the "gift" is for all Christians throughout all ages!*

Acts 2:39

³⁹ "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

At first glance this passage does seem the *"gift of the Spirit"* is for all Christians throughout all ages, but we have shown that Peter was merely explaining and applying Joel's prophecy here.

To illustrate:

Mark 16:17

¹⁷ "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

At first glance this passage seems to say that miracles shall follow all Christians throughout all ages!

We must always remember two important things:

1) Passages that seem universal can be limited by other passages!

For example:

Psalms 91:11-12

¹¹ For [God] shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.

¹² In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

This passage seems to be universal and this is exactly the way Satan quoted it to Jesus!

But Jesus quoted **Dt. 6:16** to show that "*all thy ways*" is limited; it does not include ways that tempt God!

By quoting Dt. 6, Jesus demonstrated one passage of scripture can limit another.

While Acts 2:39 seems to make a universal promise of the gift, other passages limit this miraculous ability to the 1st century.

2) Anytime a promise is given, ALL CONDITIONS must first be met before the promise can be received.

Q: Are there any other conditions besides repentance and baptism that are necessary to receive the "*gift of the Spirit*"?

A: Yes – the laying on of apostolic hands was a necessary condition! (Acts 8:18).

SUMMARY

Put yourself in their sandals and imagine what you would naturally think.

- You have just seen the Lord's apostles receive miraculous power.
- Peter just quoted an OT promise that miraculous power would be poured out on "all flesh." (2:16ff)
- He explains that Jesus poured out this power on the disciples and called it "the promise of the Holy Spirit." (2:33)
- Now he explains that if you repent and get baptized for the remission of sins you too can receive the "gift of the Spirit."

Be honest! What would have gone thru your mind if you had been there?

I believe the most natural thing for those people to think is that if they repented and got baptized they would somehow receive miraculous power.

If this is truly what is happening in Acts 2:38, we would naturally expect to see men receiving miraculous power after they obey the gospel.

Q: Is this what we see in the Book of Acts?

ACTS 8

Acts 8:14-17

¹⁴ Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,

¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

FIRST: It's possible to be baptized, but not have the gift of the Holy Spirit.

SECOND: This passage fills in the gaps.

- We learn **when** miraculous power is received – not immediately, but when apostles lay on hand.
- We learn **how** power is received ...

So ... exactly as Acts 2:38 said:

- The Samaritans repented.
- They were baptized.
- They received the "gift of the Holy Spirit."

ACTS 18

Acts 18:8

⁸ Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

Here is the conversion of the Corinthians. By reading Paul's epistles to these brethren we learn that they had received miraculous power from the laying on of Paul's hands. (2 Cor 12:12)

What do we have then?

- The Corinthians repented.
- They were baptized.
- They received the "Holy Ghost."

ACTS 19

Acts 19:1-6

¹ And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples

² he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

³ And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."

⁴ Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶ And when Paul had laid hands on them, **the Holy Spirit came upon them**, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Again notice:

- These Ephesians repented.
- They were baptized.
- They received the "Holy Ghost."

SUMMARY

In summary, Peter taught the Jews in Acts 2 that if they would repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, they too would receive the "gift of the Spirit."

It was a promise for everyone:

- **That met all the conditions and**
- **Would last as long as miracles lasted**

Never will you read in the Scriptures of anyone being denied this gift because:

- They were too young
- Too old
- They were females
- They were slaves
- They were Gentiles

The Scriptures indicate in:

Acts 8:14-18 all the Samaritans received this wonderful gift. No one was left out.

Acts 10:45-46 everyone in Cornelius' household received the gift. No one was left out.

Acts 18:8 apparently all the Corinthians baptized by Paul received the gift. None were excluded.

Acts 19:1-6 all the Ephesians received the gift. No one was excluded.

Q: Why should we conclude anything different in Acts 2?

Q: Why should we think it strange that everyone who repented and got baptized would then have apostolic hands laid upon him or her and that person would then receive the Spirit?

It seems most natural that this is exactly what happened. It fits the context and harmonizes with the overall teachings of the NT.

CONCLUSION

Today people read this wonderful passage and get it all turned around backwards.

- **They are searching for the "gift of the Spirit"**
- **BUT they reject the terms of the gospel as though they no longer applied!**

But Jesus is trying to tell us it's just the opposite!

Men **ought** to seek after the terms of salvation and realize the "*gift of the Spirit*" no longer applies!

My friend, don't expect a miracle to come! You will die in your sins if you wait till a miracle comes!

But the terms of salvation have never been repealed! They apply as much today as when they were first spoken.