
THE SEAL OF THE SPIRIT

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QUESTIONS:

- 1) In what two ways is the word "seal" used?
- 2) When "seal" is used as a noun, what does it necessarily imply?
- 3) What was the "seal" of Paul's apostleship?
- 4) What was the proof that Jesus was the Son of God?
- 5) What were "Judaizing teachers" and what were they teaching?
- 6) Ephesians 1 speaks of "we" and then speaks of "you." Who is the "we"?
- 7) How did the Ephesians receive the "seal of the Spirit"?
- 8) How does the Ephesians receiving the "seal of the Spirit" benefit anyone today?

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were **sealed** with the Holy Spirit of promise,

¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

"SEAL" AS A NOUN

The word "seal" occurs in the form of both a noun and a verb.

"seal" (σφραγίς) – noun – "that by which anything is confirmed, proved, authenticated, as by a seal" (Thayer, 609)

NOTE: The definition necessarily implies *something visible*.

1 Corinthians 9:2

² If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the **seal of my apostleship** in the Lord.

The Corinthians were the seal (visible proof) of Paul's apostleship. How? Only an apostle could impart spiritual gifts:

Acts 8:18

¹⁸ ... when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,

No one else had this ability.

Since the Corinthians received spiritual gifts from Paul, they were the seal (visible proof) that he was an apostle.

2 Corinthians 12:12

¹² Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

"SEAL" AS A VERB

Now let's see what the word means as a verb.

"seal" (σφραγίζω) – verb – "to confirm, authenticate, place beyond doubt" (Thayer, 609)

NOTE: When used in the sense of "confirming" or "placing beyond doubt" the definition implies an action that is visible – *something visible*.

John 6:27

²⁷ "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because **God the Father has set His seal on Him.**"

Christ was "sealed" (proven visibly) to be the Son of God. How? By giving the Spirit to Christ in a visible way:

John 1:32-34

³² And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.

³³ "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

³⁴ "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

The visible proof that Christ was the Son of God was that he possessed the miraculous power of the Spirit.

John 10:38

³⁸ "... though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

John 3:1-2

¹ There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

² This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

John 20:30-31

³⁰ And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

SUMMARY

- 1) Paul's seal of apostleship was the miraculous power of the Spirit. When he transferred this power to others, it became a "seal" – visible proof that he was a genuine apostle.
- 2) Jesus' "seal" that He was the Son of God was the miraculous power of the Spirit. It was visible proof to men.
- 3) The "seal" of the Spirit, which the Ephesians possessed, was the miraculous power of the Spirit – a visible assurance that they were genuine Christians.

THE EPHESIANS

In the early days of the church, there were Judaizing teachers saying that Gentiles were not really saved until they were circumcised and kept Moses' law.

Acts 15:1

¹ And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

This problem seems to have traveled up to Ephesus. Notice the references to this problem in the epistle to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:14

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

Paul is assuring the brethren that there is no longer a division between Jews and Gentiles in God's sight.

Ephesians 3:1

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles;

Paul was a prisoner because he preached Jews and Gentiles were on an equal level.

Ephesians 4:3

³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Unity is emphasized. Only one church. Not one for Jews and another for Gentiles.

They needed proof (visible) that they had obeyed the truth without being circumcised.

WHAT WAS THE SEAL?

What does the "seal of the Holy Spirit" mean?

It refers to miraculous abilities which could be seen by men – a visible proof of authenticity that these men had obeyed **the doctrine** of heaven and not a false doctrine.

[Keep in mind the doctrine was being confirmed, not necessarily men's personal salvation. First Cor. 13:1-3 shows men could have miraculous abilities and still be lost personally. However, the doctrine they had obeyed was authenticated by the miracles.]

Acts 2

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**.

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."

From this notice:

- The "promise of the Holy Spirit" was something that people could "**see and hear**" (v33) – i.e. visible.

- The "gift of the Spirit" was a "promise," not only to the Jews, but also to "all who were afar off" – i.e. Gentiles!

God gave both Jews and Gentiles the "gift of the Spirit" as visible proof to all that *the doctrine* they obeyed was from heaven. Being circumcised and keeping Moses' Law was no longer necessary to be saved. The gospel alone is all that was needed.

WHEN WAS THE SEAL GIVEN?

When was the seal (visible proof) given to the Ephesians?

Ephesians 1:13

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, **having believed**, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

It was given after they "believed" – i.e. obeyed the gospel.

In other words, they did not have to be circumcised and keep the law to receive this "seal."

HOW WAS SEAL RECEIVED?

Q: How was this seal received?

Ephesians 1 doesn't tell how. We must look elsewhere to discover the answer to this question.

Thankfully, the Book of Acts does not leave us doubting. It tells us exactly how these Ephesians received this power:

Acts 19:1-2

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."

"Did you receive the Spirit" – refers to miraculous power. We will read v6 in just a moment and notice this.

"When you believed" – refers to their obedience to the gospel.

Note:

- Paul thought these people were saved.
- He thought it was possible to be saved without miraculous power.
- He thought it was possible to be saved without having the Spirit literally in your body.

Acts 19:3-6

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.

Q: After these Ephesians were saved (believed), how did they receive Spirit? By laying on of apostolic hands.

This miraculous ability was a visible seal.

Q: What did it do?

A: It was visible proof to everyone that Ephesians obeyed the truth – confirmed the word. No circumcision necessary.

MIRACULOUS OR NON-MIRACULOUS

Was the "seal of the Spirit" miraculous power, or something non-miraculous?

If non-miraculous, then no one could see anything. It would be equivalent to **an invisible seal**.

ILL: Buy property and receive a deed. If it's genuine, it has a seal.

Suppose a question of ownership comes up and judge calls for papers. No seal can be seen, but you explain: "**It's a new, invisible seal that people cannot see.**"

FOR THEIR BENEFIT ONLY?

Was this miraculous power given only for the benefit of the Ephesians? No. This benefits even us today.

- The "seal" proved beyond doubt that the Ephesians were Christians without obeying Moses' law.
- When we do the same thing the Ephesians did, we can know we are saved just like they were.
- How can we know this? Because God does not show partiality. If He accepted one group who obeyed the gospel, but **did not** accept another group who did the same thing, He would be showing partiality.

Acts 10:34-35

³⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

³⁵ "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

So, the "seal" which the Ephesians received benefited all Christians in ages to come.

"GUARANTEE"

The seal was called a "guarantee":

Ephesians 1:14

¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

When we buy product, we want a guarantee that it is genuine and will last. This is what the miraculous power of the Spirit did for these Ephesians.

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 4:30

³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

From this we learn that men may "grieve" God's Spirit. How? By disregarding His instructions:

Isalah 63:10

¹⁶ But they rebelled and **grieved His Holy Spirit**; So He turned Himself against them as an enemy, And He fought against them.

How did Israel "grieve" the Spirit? By rebelling against His instructions:

Nehemiah 9

²⁰ **You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them**, And did not withhold Your manna from their mouth, And gave them water for their thirst.

²⁶ "Nevertheless they were disobedient And rebelled against You, Cast Your law behind their backs And killed Your prophets, who testified against them To turn them to Yourself; And they worked great provocations.

³⁰ Yet for many years You had patience with them, And testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

When Israel refused to listen to Spirit-inspired prophets, they were "grieving" the Spirit.

"DAY OF REDEMPTION"

The "seal of the Spirit" was "**for**" (εἰς) "the day of redemption."

NOTE: Must be careful to notice what this says and what it does not say:

- Does not say that all Christians throughout time would be sealed like the Ephesians.
- Does not say the "seal" would function actively until the end of time ("day of redemption").
- Rather, the passage describes the purpose for which the "seal" was given. They were sealed "**for**" (εἰς) or "in view of" the day of redemption.

I.e., they were sealed with the Spirit (given visible proof) which guaranteed they would eventually be raised to eternal life on the day of redemption.

Ephesians 4:30 (Weymouth's Trans. 1912)

³⁰ And beware of grieving the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you have been sealed in preparation for the day of Redemption.

As mentioned earlier, the "sealing" of the Ephesians was not for their benefit alone. It was for benefit of all Christians in ages to come.

- Everyone knows the Ephesians were saved.
- How? Because God set His seal upon them. He gave visible proof as a seal of authenticity.
- Anyone else who does what they did will likewise be saved.

CONCLUSION

The real question we should all be concerned with is: Have we obeyed the same gospel in the same way which the Ephesians did?

Acts 19:5

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

Have you done this? If so, you can be assured that have obeyed the truth.