

“What is being said?”

This short paper is in answer to a question I received recently. *“Philip had been there, he preached the Gospel and miracles took place while he was there. Apart from the apparent fact that only the apostles could lay hands on people to receive the baptism of the Spirit at that time, is there any other reason why Philip could not pray for them to receive the Spirit and/or lay hands on them?”*

In response I sent off a quick copy of my Bible study on Acts 8. But, when I looked again at it, I can see that my answer was inadequate and a little ‘off-beam’. I have since altered my Bible study to suit my current view, which I think is closer to scripture, and this paper will specifically answer the question. I thank the questioner for causing me to check out my own words!

The text is this:

“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”

In essence I must ignore the question as it is put, and restructure my answer to suit a better approach.

Acts 8:14-17

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 29 July 2016 10:58

Paul was, at that time, wreaking havoc throughout Judaea and Samaria, for as yet he was not saved. For this reason many Christians escaped Jerusalem and main areas (verses 1-4), but they ventured forth to hear preachers when they arrived at their secret abodes. It was against this background that Philip travelled to Samaria, the one-time capitol of ancient Israel, to preach the Gospel. This was not the apostle, but an evangelist and a deacon of the church at Jerusalem.

Previously, (Acts 6) the Apostles told the church at Jerusalem that their tasks prevented them from merely attending tables and visiting widows, etc. They had to spread the Gospel. Therefore, the church must choose seven men of impeccable character and faith to be deacons. (Acts 6:1-4). You will note that the men chosen were “full of the Holy Ghost” and wisdom, thus proving they were saved men. Once chosen the apostles could get on with the role required of them by God (verse 4).

Amongst the seven was Philip. Thus, we know that the man we have here is NOT the apostle Philip. The seven had hands laid on them. Though the apostles did this for this situation, pastors in local churches could also lay hands on people, e.g. to heal members, etc. Therefore, when we say ‘only’ the apostles could do this, we have to be very specific about the situation. It seems likely that the reason the apostles laid hands on the seven deacons was that they were the ones to suggest their office, and were already there at that time.

We read that the deacon Philip travelled to Samaria to preach and did great miracles. Because they saw the miracles *“the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake.”* (verse 6). The miracles caused *“great joy”* amongst the people.

However, note what was said: the people

“gave heed”

to the Gospel. It does not necessarily mean they became disciples or that they were saved. The Jews listening to John the Baptist gave heed to him, and thousands were baptised, but it was the baptism of Jewish repentance, not the baptism that follows a declaration of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Gave heed” simply means *prosechō*. That is, they listened carefully and noted what was said. Of the thousands who listened with similar deep interest to Jesus, not all were saved, but they were all impressed by His miracles. The word means to turn one’s attention to something/be attentive, because the subject matter was so interesting, and the speaker was powerful. It also means to ‘bring near’. The popular saying comes to mind:

“You can take a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink”.

Acts 8:14-17

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 29 July 2016 10:58

We can tell this is the meaning to hold to, because exactly the same words are used for the people who followed the magician, Simon: *“To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.”*

(verse 10). You will see that this man was a sorcerer, not saved. Yet, people “gave heed”, just as they did with Philip.

Those who listened to Philip and believed his words, however, were baptised. Even Simon believed and was baptised. They believed in Jesus Christ. The question we have here is why they did not receive the Holy Spirit at the same time? It is very apparent that the Holy Spirit was given to all who were saved, so what may we deduce from these texts? (It is conjecture to assume that Philip was unable to extend the Spirit to anyone; we must not assume from a position of incomplete information).

The Apostles in Jerusalem came to hear of the immense interest in the Gospel where Philip was, so Peter and John were sent to help him (verse 14). When they arrived they prayed for those who ‘gave heed’, that they *“may receive the Holy Ghost”*. In verse 16 we find that they only *“were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus”*, but did not experience the Holy Spirit within. Peter and John therefore laid hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost.

A further note is that though Simon had similarly been baptised, his conversion was not genuine (verse 21). What this shows us is that baptism itself is not a proof that someone is saved. Simon was advised to first repent of his wickedness. We see a very specific difference in the eunuch whom Philip later met (same chapter). Here the eunuch professed belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so he was baptised.

Now, you will also note that we are not told Philip himself baptised the people who “gave heed”. Nor are we told how many were baptised. My conclusion about this episode is that some of those who were baptised, like Simon, were not actually saved beforehand. Being Jews, they must have likened the baptism to that of John the Baptists’ baptism – one that signified repentance only. There was indeed a great fervour in Samaria because of the miracles. But, it is further conjecture that those who were baptised were all saved, if any. Another conjecture (mine), is that when Peter and John arrived, they found baptised people who were unsaved.

Acts 8:14-17

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 29 July 2016 10:58

(There were also powerful preachers who had only undertaken John the Baptist's baptism, yet they believed. Apollos is one such man, and he had to be taught more about Christian theology and biblical truths – Acts 18. So, simple statements do not always convey the full import of a situation).

The above is my conclusion because the apostles could not be everywhere. If the Holy Spirit is not given on salvation, then how many of those supposedly saved were *actually* saved? How many did *not* have the Holy Ghost within? If the Apostles could not get to every single one of them, it means few were real Christians (that is, if we take the heretical charismatic view). This is why I say the ones who received the Holy Spirit but had already been baptised were not saved until the two Apostles came and 'checked them out'. They would not have prayed for them to experience the Holy Spirit unless the ones baptised showed proof of salvation, I am convinced that though baptised, these people were not actually saved. The only conclusion we can reach from this, is that, as today, many are baptised who have never been saved.

Philip was inundated with followers because of his miracles, and perhaps his venture harboured those who had repented as Jews, but not as true followers of Jesus Christ. If the Holy Spirit enters a person immediately he or she is saved, we cannot conclude anything else. If Philip was indeed inundated (and this is why the two Apostles arrived), then we can understand the problem.

The main issue is that the Holy Spirit enters a person when he or she is saved, not some time after. Otherwise, we could have many instances of people saying they are saved, but whose salvation is waiting at the door because there are no Apostles around! Thus, they are not saved at all, because without the indwelling of the Spirit they cannot claim to have a relationship with the Lord, nor can they function as believers. This is just one reason I cannot accept the 'second blessing' idea.

We are either saved in the twinkling of an eye when we repent, or we are not, and proof of our salvation is the fact that the Holy Spirit indwells us straight away. There can be no time period in between salvation and reception of the Holy Spirit, for without the Spirit one is not assured salvation or entry into Heaven. Thus, if a man repents and is saved, but he does not have the Holy Spirit immediately within – what happens if he dies between the two actions? Logic must follow logic!

Acts 8:14-17

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 29 July 2016 10:58

Some might argue that this scenario is irrelevant. They might say that so long as the man has repented and is saved, God will overlook the fact that he did not quite make it to receiving the Holy Spirit. To me, this is nonsense. To live as a saved believer we **MUST** have the Holy Spirit within, otherwise we think, speak and act by our own volition, without the spiritual power of God within us. Thus, there is no difference between our pre-salvation character and life and our post-salvation character and life!

But, God takes us through several stages to separate us from our former life and sin. We are told in scripture that no man seeks after God, because we are all conceived in sin... and so everything we think, say and do, is sin. We cannot shrug this off nor may we work to get rid of it. We are incapable of doing so.

Therefore, God will break into our sinful state and cause us to be 'born again' (see relevant article on this. Note that only the elect will be given this privilege). Literally, this means He, and only He, makes our dead spirit alive. Once this miracle occurs, we can begin to hear God, and, perhaps, to seek after Him. At a time determined by God, we will repent, and then we are saved. At that exact moment we receive the Holy Spirit.

This was confirmed even before Jesus died. When He spoke to Nicodemus (John 3), He specifically told him that he had to be 'born again' (made spiritually alive) "of the Spirit". Without this he could not enter Heaven/was not accepted by God.

I challenge you to find a way for a man to be fully saved and yet not infilled with the Holy Spirit at the very point of salvation. There is no way to do it, for if the Holy Spirit does not come immediately, the supposedly 'saved' man is in a no-man's-land, neither unsaved nor saved. The ramifications of a second blessing are dangerous and unbiblical.

Additional Information

The time immediately after the death of Jesus was interesting, because to that point many Jews had been baptised by John the Baptist or by his associates. Paul spoke with many of these Jews, asking what baptism they had experienced. He told them that the Jewish baptism merely pointed them to the coming Jesus Christ, in Whom the Jews who were thus baptised had to believe. So, these 'believers' were led to Christian baptism. Then Paul laid hands on them and they were filled with the Holy Ghost. This appears to be backward – baptised first and then filled with the Spirit. Not really, for they had already told Paul that they believed (implied by Paul in Acts 19:2), and the baptism of repentance was a Jewish act, separate from the gift of salvation,

Acts 8:14-17

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 29 July 2016 10:58

and separate from believer's baptism.

The Holy Ghost came to take the place of Jesus Christ on earth. This is why Jews were told that they were baptised in water by John, but had to wait until the Holy Ghost came later to be filled with the Spirit. That was not a statement of generality, but a very specific reference to the historical time-lapse between the going of Jesus from this earth, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell men (Acts 1:5). Thus, later, Peter was able to call the Jews to be baptised "*and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:38). No time lapse is noticed in that statement. So, in verse 41 we find that about 3,000 souls were "*added*".

To what? To the Church of Jesus Christ! This coincided with the saved Jews being filled with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 10:47. Here Jews were offered baptism, because they had ALREADY received the Holy Ghost, though they do not appear to have had hands laid on them by an Apostle. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 we find that we are all baptised into the one body, having the same Holy Spirit. The structure of this verse tells us that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit took place *before* baptism took place. This same conclusion can also be found in Galatians 3:27, where those baptised "*have put on Christ*". This automatically means they were saved and given the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter argued that gentiles had been saved, just like them (Jewish Apostles), and they had received the Holy Ghost, without Apostolic intervention (Acts 15:8). Sanctification is a big part of the Holy Spirit's role (Romans 15:16, 1 Corinthians 2:13 and 6:19), so, if there was ever a 'time gap' between repentance unto salvation and receiving the Holy Spirit, we could not be sanctified during the intervening time lapse, and this would mean that though we might have repented, we present ourselves before God as unsanctified! This is not possible, and underlines the fact that we receive the Holy Spirit as soon as we are saved by grace. Nor can any allegedly saved man say Jesus is Lord, without the presence of the Spirit in His life (1 Corinthians 12:3). This implies that those who claim to be saved but have not yet received the Holy Spirit (in charismatic theology) CANNOT say Jesus is Lord!

We also read that regeneration (being born again, which always leads to being saved) is synonymous with receiving the Spirit (Titus 3:5). If this were not the case, then the idea that we can be unsaved one moment and gloriously saved the next, is complete nonsense. Those who try to separate the Holy Spirit from salvation are playing with fire and defeating the whole

Acts 8:14-17

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 29 July 2016 10:58

Gospel. If we are not the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:19) immediately, then it means our bodies continue to be temples of sin, even though we have been saved! The nonsense involved in charismatic beliefs has far reaching effects, and twists genuine biblical thinking. Hebrews 6:4-on reads as repentance to salvation equals indwelling of the Spirit.

The testimony of a saved soul is that the Holy Spirit indwells the person the moment he is saved. Charismatics introduce anxiety and doubt into the situation by saying that the Holy Spirit indwelling is a second experience, thus bringing in an unspecified time period, during which the person is not really saved, but is 'saved-in-waiting', a period when his soul is not clean, cannot act spiritually, and cannot even say Jesus is Lord! Indeed, in this hypothesis he can easily be overrun by demons. Is this the Gospel? No, it definitely is not... it is heresy.

© May 2016

---o Oo---

{loadposition btm_address}