

God's Eternal Plan #10
The Birth of the Church
Acts 2:1-13

It all starts so quietly – on a warm summer's day. It is a quiet afternoon, there is no breeze, but off in the distance the sky looks dark and slightly ominous. It is not long, however, before those gray-green clouds are right overhead. Two pressure systems (one hot, the other cold) have collided, and slowly the air begins to rotate counterclockwise. Slowly at first – round and round and then down towards the ground. And suddenly you realize that it is a tornado; a violent whirling wind whipping away any obstacles in its destructive path.

Last year in less than 24 hours 70 tornados ripped through Oklahoma, Kansas, and Tennessee, killing 49 and causing more than \$1 billion in damages.

Acts tell us that on this day a large number of people gathered in an Upper Room when suddenly they heard a noise. The sound of a tornado filled the whole house where they were sitting. And with the sound of a mighty rushing wind also came little blazes of fire that settled on the heads of those present! And with those two events began the marvelous Pentecostal transformation and the birth of the Church.

Previous to this event the Holy Spirit came only to select individuals at special times to accomplish a specific goal or mission. And before the New Testament, the Jews believed that, because of the sins of the nation, the Spirit of God had ascended into heaven and would not return to be poured out on all believers until the “last days.” Thus, Peter referred to the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

There have been many sermons preached, books written, and opinions given concerning the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” I want to make this statement: I do indeed believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Having said that I want to share with you what the Bible says concerning this awesome event.

There are four verses in the gospels, which record what John the Baptist promised regarding “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” In Matthew 3:11 we are told, “I, indeed, baptize you with water unto repentance, but he who cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.” In Mark 1:8 we are told, “I indeed, have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” In Luke 3:16 we are told, “John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy

to loose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” And in John 1:33 we are told, “And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”

Please notice that according to the Word of God, the One to do the baptizing in the Holy Spirit was Christ Himself. Now we are told that this promise of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, as seen in Acts 2:32-33, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which you now see and hear.” **Therefore, we are able to conclude that the administrator of the Holy Spirit is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ!**

With that thought in mind, I want to draw your attention to Acts 10:44-46, where Peter had gone to the house of Cornelius, a gentile, “While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word. And they of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter (why?), because on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”

Turn over to Acts 19:1-7, “And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve.”

Now, I wanted to bring these passages of Scripture into your mind, to share with you what was happening then, that is very much different today, even later in the New Testament era. 1. In Acts 2 we can see the 120 disciples representing the Jews, being baptized into the “body of Christ,” or into the true “church.” 2. In Acts 10 we see Cornelius representing the Gentiles being baptized into the “body of Christ,” or into the true “church.” 3. In Acts 19 we see those believers saved by the ministry of John the Baptist (by faith in the coming Messiah) being baptized into the “body of Christ,” or the true “church.”

This transition was manifested by the outward “sign” (1 Corinthians 14:22) of speaking in “tongues.” There were other Jews saved on the Day of

Pentecost (3,000) and there is nothing said about any of those speaking in tongues. The Word of God tells us of other Gentiles being saved in Acts 13:48. The Philippian jailer was saved in Acts 16 and nothing is said about him having any outward manifestation such as tongues.

Now, before you become upset and turn of our “hearing aid” let me remind you once more that I do indeed believe in Spirit baptism and the gift of tongues, but I also believe that we must have a biblical foundation for what we believe. The purpose of Spirit baptism is to place **all** believers into the Body of Christ. This truth is very clearly seen in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit were we **all** baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond of free; and have been **all** made to drink into one Spirit.” Listen, this inspired Word of God tells us that “we all (were) baptized into one body.” **Every believer is included.** This is seen clearly in Ephesians 1:22-23, “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.” And again in Ephesians 2:19-22, “Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” **The Bible declares that every believer shares in the “one Spirit baptism” and in the “drinking” of which Jesus spoke.** The big difference is simply this: In the instance of the Book of Acts, “tongues” was an outward manifestation of the “Spirit baptism” into the Body of Christ. Today “tongues” is no longer a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, but it is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

This is very clearly seen in 1 Corinthians 12:4-31, “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were

the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts..." **It is well to remember that in addition to forming the Church and making it His dwelling place, the Holy Spirit takes up His abide in every individual Christian!** That is the reason Paul asked the question in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?"

Let me stress that according to the Word of God, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer is not the privilege enjoyed by only a few Christians, who have experienced some kind of "second blessing," but is the portion of every child of God. And because of that fact, we are never told, commanded, or urged to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That idea is alien to the Scriptures. **Yet some seek, pray, wait for such experience.** They are persuaded that God has reserved for a chosen few that unusual baptism. They expectantly, prayerfully, and sometimes agonizingly wait before the Lord for this heavenly gift. Some even build whole systems of theology on it, presenting it in their teaching as a "second work of grace."

With that said, look with me at the filling of the Holy Spirit, as seen in Ephesians 5:18, "And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." **You see, today we have been guilty, many times, of asking God for something we already have!** There is no need for a believer to pray for the "baptism" of the Holy Spirit, for that takes place when we are "born again." But the need today is for Christian to be "filled with the Spirit."

Writing to the church in Corinth, Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as

babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for to this time you were not able to bear it, neither yet not are you able. For you are yet carnal...” **The “carnal” Christian is one who has been born again of the Holy Spirit, but who has never allowed the Holy Spirit to have unlimited control of his life. On the other hand, the Spirit-filled life is the Christ-filled life.** In 1 Peter 4:2 we are told that Jesus Christ “hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God.” In other words, the Spirit-filled life is when we allow Christ to think through our mind, love through our heart, and witness through our lips!

Therefore, when a person is born again God the Holy Spirit bestows on that individual certain gifts of the Spirit, as seen in 1 Corinthians 12. But those gifts are not manifested in the believers’ life unless they are living the Spirit-filled life! A person might be filled with the Spirit and not have the gift of preaching, the gift of healing, the gift of speaking in tongues, etc. But, if you are saved, you have been given a gift as seen in 1 Corinthians 12:11.

The problem that Paul was dealing with in the Church at Corinth was that there were some in the church that had receive the gift of “tongues” and had developed the idea that if a person did not have this gift, might not even be saved, and surely they had not “received the Holy Spirit.” We have some people today that have this very same idea, and they too are just as wrong as those folks in the Church at Corinth.

If you are saved by the grace of God, you have been baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, and you have all of Him. That settles your salvation. But now the Spirit wants all of you, and this comes by a complete emptying of self and yielding to the will of God for your life.