

LESSON 5

The Gift of the Holy Ghost

Acts 2:1-4, 38; Romans 8:9-15

We again turn our attention to the steps that we must take to enter the kingdom of God. According to the Word of God, the first is *faith*, the second *repentance*, the third *water baptism* in the name of Jesus Christ, and the fourth and final step is *receiving the Holy Ghost*. After being born again, we must then continue in the apostles' doctrine, living a holy and godly life.

Speaking with other tongues is the initial sign that God gives us when we receive the Holy Ghost. Our next study will focus specifically on speaking in tongues, so this lesson will only mention it briefly.

Much of the Christian world today views the Holy Ghost as an optional blessing that is not essential to salvation. How important is the Holy Ghost in our lives according to the Scriptures? From the Bible it is evident that the Holy Ghost is essential in our lives for us to be saved from sin. Let us examine what God has to say on the subject. Then we can give others a reason of the hope that is in us concerning the Holy Ghost.

THE PROPHETS SPOKE OF THE HOLY GHOST

Four great prophets, one of them being the Holy Ghost baptizer, told us that we can and will receive the Holy Ghost. Peter said "all that are afar off" (Acts 2:39) are candidates for the Holy Ghost. Prophetic Scripture has been fulfilled over and over again since the Day of Pentecost c. A.D. 33. Worldwide, men and women are receiving the Holy Ghost as evidenced by speaking with other tongues.

Isaiah—foretold that God would use stammering lips and another tongue (Isaiah 28:9-12). Paul referred to this prophecy in one of his epistles.

(See I Corinthians 14:21.) Isaiah described the joy of this experience as like drawing water from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:1-6).

Joel—foretold the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-29). Peter informed us that the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:16-18).

John the Baptist—All four gospel writers recorded John's prophecy of Christ baptizing with the Holy Ghost and fire (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Jesus Himself declared that John the Baptist was a prophet (Luke 7:24-30).

Jesus Christ—"Prophet of all prophets" is a proper and fitting title for our Lord. In the truest sense of the word, Jesus was a prophet (Luke 24:19; Acts 3:22-23). He prophesied of many things such as the destruction of Jerusalem, the rising of false christs, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

- He described the Holy Ghost as rivers of living water (John 7:37-39). The Holy Ghost is the living water of John 4:10-14.
- When Jesus spoke of being born of the Spirit, He meant being baptized with the Holy Ghost. (See John 3:1-8.)
- He foretold of the coming Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-13).
- He promised His followers right before His ascension to heaven that they would be baptized with the Holy Ghost a few days from

then (Acts 1:5). Jesus fulfilled His promise on the Day of Pentecost. (See Acts 2:1-4.)

WHAT IS THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST?

Many man-made terms, which are not consistent with the Bible, are used to describe the Holy Spirit. To answer the above question properly, let us go to the Bible for a scriptural definition of the Holy Ghost. The following terms describe the gift of the Holy Ghost in the life of the believer.

Spirit of Christ—Also called the Spirit of God because Jesus is God (Romans 8:9-11). Jesus spoke of being *with us* and of being *in us*; the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of God coming into our lives. (See Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:16-18.)

A Baptism—The baptism of the Holy Ghost is an inundating, overwhelming immersion in the Spirit. God’s Spirit baptizes us into one body (I Corinthians 12:13). Being baptized with the Holy Ghost is the “one baptism” of which Paul spoke (Ephesians 4:5).

A Birth—Two distinct elements constitute the born-again experience, namely, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost baptism (John 3:1-8). Jesus equated the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the birth of the Spirit.

A Seal—God gives us the Holy Ghost to seal us for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). “Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). (See II Corinthians 1:22.)

The Earnest of our Inheritance—As great as this experience is, it is only a down payment on, or part of, what we will receive in the end, if we are faithful (II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14). Paul referred to this experience as “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Romans 8:23).

Rest—Jesus invited people to come to Him and find rest for their souls (Isaiah 28:12; Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:1-11). In Christ we have

ceased from our labors and have entered into the rest (sabbath) of the Holy Ghost. Every day is a holy day of rest, peace, and joy in Him.

Spirit of Adoption—Through the Holy Ghost, we have been adopted as children of God, crying out “Abba,” which means “daddy” or “father” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:5).

Living Water—Those who have drunk of the spiritual drink and of the spiritual Rock (I Corinthians 10:1-4) know the depth of this term. Living water sounds refreshing and revitalizing. Jesus said the Holy Ghost is like that (John 4:10-14; 7:37-39).

Power from on High—We are weak creatures, needing power outside the human realm. Through the Holy Ghost, God has provided this needed power—power to be witnesses (Acts 1:8) and to live as God directs us in His Word. We need to be endowed with power from on high. (See Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-4.) This power comes from the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (I Peter 1:12).

The Comforter—Jesus called the Holy Ghost the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, a guide, a testifier, and a reprover (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-13).

WHO CAN RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST?

God has made conditional promises to those who want the Holy Ghost. When these Bible conditions are met, *anyone* can receive the Holy Ghost. God is no respecter of persons but will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13). Let us observe what the Bible has to say on the subject.

- God’s promise of the Holy Ghost is to all flesh—sons, daughters, servants, and handmaidens (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:16-17).
- John the Baptist did not exclude anyone in his preaching about the Holy Ghost baptism (Matthew 3:11).

- Peter declared that the Holy Ghost is for the Jews and for Gentiles (Acts 2:38-39).
- God gives the Holy Ghost to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).
- Those at Samaria and the Ethiopian received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:1-40).
- Cornelius and those in his home received the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:44-48).
- Persons from every kindred, tongue, and nation can receive the Holy Ghost (Revelation 5:9).

Angels desire to look into this great salvation, and prophets have searched and inquired diligently into it (I Peter 1:10-12), but we can have it!

EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST

On the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the church, about 120 believers spoke with other tongues as they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:1-4). God's Word is precise in giving us example after example of this phenomenal sign of speaking in tongues as evidence that one has received the Holy Ghost. Millions have experienced this glorious, ecstatic utterance when they received this precious gift.

Paul spoke with tongues more than anyone in the Corinthian church (I Corinthians 14:18). No doubt, the first occasion was when he received the Holy Ghost. (See Acts 9:17-18.) There are numerous scriptural statements about speaking in tongues.

- Isaiah prophesied of God speaking through another tongue to his people (Isaiah 28:9-12).
- When the New Testament church began, the believers spoke in other tongues (Acts 2:1-4).
- Though not explicitly stated, the evidence reveals that the Samaritans spoke in tongues (Acts 8:1-25).

- Cornelius's household, which was Gentile, spoke in tongues (Acts 10:44-48).
- Disciples of John the Baptist were rebaptized and spoke in tongues (Acts 19:1-6).

SYNONYMOUS TERMS FOR THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

There are many different views today regarding when and how we receive the Holy Ghost. We must base our beliefs and experience on the Scriptures, not on human opinion. There are at least nine ways in which the Bible describes receiving the Holy Ghost. None of these descriptions say that there are degrees or stages in receiving the Holy Ghost. They do not describe different experiences; they are different expressions by different people that describe the same experience. We may use each of these descriptions today when we speak of receiving the Holy Ghost.

- **Baptized with the Holy Ghost** (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:5).
- **Filled with the Holy Ghost** (Acts 2:1-4; 9:17).
- **Gift of the Holy Ghost** (Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; Romans 5:5; 6:23).
- **Received the Holy Ghost** (John 7:37-39; Acts 8:15-19; 10:47; 19:2).
- **Holy Ghost came upon** (Acts 1:8; 19:6).
- **Spirit poured out** (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17; 10:45).
- **Holy Ghost sent down from heaven** (I Peter 1:12; compare with Acts 2:2 and the "sound from heaven.").
- **Holy Ghost fell** (Acts 8:16; 10:44; 11:15).
- **Holy Ghost shed on us** (Acts 2:33; Romans 5:5; Titus 3:5-6).

In the account of Cornelius and his household being filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:44-48), four of these terms are used in five verses: fell, poured out, gift, and received. Did Cornelius receive four kinds, degrees, stages, or types of the Holy Ghost? No. It was one experience described in four different ways.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HOLY GHOST

God's Spirit is very important in our lives, and our relationship with Him is a sacred thing. Indeed, Jesus warned us not to blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Forgiveness can never be obtained for this sin (Mark 3:28-30). Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is the *only* unpardonable sin. All other sins can be forgiven.

The Scripture stresses the importance and essentiality of receiving the Holy Ghost. Let us give special attention to the following verses:

- Without the Holy Ghost, we will not be in the catching away of the church (Romans 8:11; I Thessalonians 4:16-17).
- Without the Spirit of Christ, we are none of His (Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:3; II Timothy 2:19).
- We cannot call Jesus "Lord" except by the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 12:3).

Once a person has exercised faith in Christ through repentance, water baptism, and the reception of Holy Ghost, his justification is complete and the process of his sanctification and ultimate glorification has begun. Though this experience may sound like a big order, and it is, anyone can receive it. It is our responsibility to believe and repent, to allow a minister to baptize us, and then to believe God to baptize us with the Holy Ghost. This is Bible salvation.

SALVATION

The New Testament describes the glorious experience of salvation with several synonymous terms; a few of them are below. These terms cover the

complete experience of being born again.

Washing—Cleansing comes through the blood, water, and Spirit, as a result of our faith in Christ and obedience to the Word of God (John 13:10; I Corinthians 6:11; I Peter 1:22).

Resurrection—The Bible compares being saved from sin to being made alive and being resurrected (Ephesians 2:1-6; Colossians 2:13; Romans 6:1-11).

Birth—Newborn babies come into the world, behold its beauty for the first time, and then grow up to enjoy all the exciting things that life brings. When people are born into the family of God, they are nourished by the Word and grow up to be useful workers for God's cause (John 1:13; 3:1-8; Galatians 4:29; I Peter 1:23; I John 2:29).

Circumcision—Spiritual circumcision of the heart (Jeremiah 4:4) occurs today when we obey Acts 2:38. Together, water baptism and Spirit baptism fully circumcise the heart (Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 3:29; Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:10-13).

Translation—Spiritually we are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Romans 6:4-5; Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 1:13).

Being in the kingdom of God—God's kingdom is a spiritual entity that we become part of by being born again (Matthew 16:19; Mark 12:34; Luke 12:31-32; John 3:1-8; Acts 8:12; Romans 14:17).

Being saved—Salvation is accomplished in our lives by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5; See Acts 2:1-4), which comes through obeying the gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

Being a new creature—"Creature" in this instance means "creation." Only in and through Christ can we become new creations (II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15).

The Bible describes Stephen, the first martyr of the church, as being *full* of the Holy Ghost (Acts 6:3, 8). What a testimony! May it become ours.