

Manifestations of the Spirit in Scripture

I. MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

- A. On the day of Pentecost, 120 intercessors were filled with the Spirit and then experienced the manifestations of the Spirit, which included the sound of rushing wind, tongues of fire resting on each person who spoke in a language that they did not previously know, etc.
- ²Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house...³There appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues...⁶The multitude...were confused...⁷They were all amazed and marveled...¹²and perplexed...***”
(Acts 2:1-12)
- B. Those who observed them had various responses. Some were amazed and perplexed, and others mocked the Spirit’s work. Today, some see the manifestations as the work of the Spirit, whereas others are angry or confused. Many are skeptical, seeing manifestations only as fleshly behavior.
- C. We do recognize that it is common for there to be fleshly mixture, imitation, or exaggeration in people who claim to be manifesting under the power of the Holy Spirit; however, the presence of a fleshly dimension in some does not invalidate the genuine work of the Spirit in others.
- D. Throughout both biblical and church history unusual manifestations have been reported by some. For more on this see my document entitled *The Manifestations of the Spirit in Church History*.

II. MANIFESTATIONS IN SCRIPTURE

- A. ***Falling under the influence of the Spirit:*** This is often referred to as being slain in the Spirit, or resting in the Spirit, or being overcome in the Spirit. This is the most common manifestation. People feel lightness, often with a sense of joy. Some just lie down to receive more from God, such as emotional or physical healing, deliverance, or impartation of power for ministry.
1. In the Bible there are many examples of people who fell as they encountered God’s presence. John fell down in the presence of Jesus’ glory (Rev. 1:17), as did the disciples (Mt. 17:6). The soldiers who arrested Jesus fell to the ground (Jn. 18:6). Saul fell on the road to Damascus when he encountered Jesus’ glory at his conversion (Acts 9:4-8).
 2. Ezekiel fell down before the glory of the Lord (Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; 43:3; 44:4). Daniel fell, had no strength, and even passed out, going into a deep sleep (Dan. 8:7-10, 17-18; 10:8-9). He was overwhelmed by God’s presence, having no strength to get up (Dan. 10:9, 17).
 3. God’s glory was manifest in such power that the priests could not function or enter the temple because of God’s glory (2 Chr. 7:1-2).
- ¹The glory of the Lord filled the temple. ²The priests could not enter the house... because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord’s house. (2 Chr. 7:1-2)***

- B. **Trembling:** The fear of God fell on the people near Daniel as he received a vision (Dan. 10:7). Daniel trembled in the fear of God (Dan. 8:17-18; 10:7-11), as did the disciples (Mt. 17:6).
⁷The men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled... ⁸No strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength... ⁹I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground... ¹¹While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. (Dan. 10:7-11)
- C. **Shaking:** Some shake, slightly or violently. Quakers were known for this and thus received their name. There are many examples in Scripture of those who shook or trembled in the fear of the Lord. When Moses received the Ten Commandments, the people shook, along with the mountain (Ex. 19:16-18)! Sometimes even buildings shook in God's presence (Acts 4:31; Isa. 6:4).
- D. **Speechless:** Daniel was speechless as a result of his encounter with God (Dan. 10:15-19). Some have an inability to talk because of losing the physical ability or mental concentration to speak. They may be conscious but unable to talk for a period of time (Ezek. 3:26; Lk. 1:22).
²⁶"I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth so you shall be mute." (Ezek. 3:26)
- E. **Weeping:** Many have tears of joy or the tenderness of feeling loved by God or love for God, or they weep in repentance or mourning over sin or spiritual dullness (2 Chr. 34:27; Hos. 12:4; Mt. 26:75; Lk. 19:41; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; Rev. 5:4). Some weep as the result of an inner healing and others because of a burden in intercession (Heb 5:7).
- F. **Trances:** Peter and Paul fell into trances, allowing them to see and hear in the spirit world (Acts 10:10; 22:17). Balaam fell into a trance—he received an open vision (Num. 24:3-4).
- G. **"Pockets of power":** The report of small "pockets" of heightened activity of the Spirit is common in times of revival. When people walk into a specific area like this, they experience the Spirit's presence in an intensified way. They may fall, laugh, shake, cry, or receive healing. An example of this dynamic occurred when Saul and his men went near a group of prophets (1 Sam. 19). When they came near the prophets, the Spirit came on Saul's men and they also prophesied. When Saul sent more men, they prophesied. Saul sent a third group who also prophesied (19:20-21). Finally Saul went, and the Spirit came on him, and he too prophesied (19:22-24).
- H. **Fire:** The believers in the upper room saw fire resting on each person (Acts 2:3). God's fire fell from the sky in the Old Testament (Lev. 9:24; 1 Kgs. 18:38; 1 Chr. 21:26). In the end times there will be signs of blood, fire, and smoke (Joel 2:30-31). Fire will come from the sky in the first, second, third, and sixth trumpets and fourth bowl (Rev. 8:5-10; 9:17-18; 16:8). The two witnesses and the False Prophet will call fire from heaven (Rev. 11:5; 13:13).
¹⁹"I will show...signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke." (Acts 2:19)
- I. **"Drunk in the Spirit":** Those who were filled with the Spirit appeared as drunk to the unbelievers who saw them (Acts 2:15). This was a rare sign that was meant to result in people coming to salvation! Some misapply this sign by promoting it in the hope that it will occur regularly in their meetings—they cultivate a "culture of manifestations" instead of allowing them to happen occasionally as a sign that results in unbelievers coming to the Lord.

III. MANIFESTATIONS NOT SPECIFICALLY RECORDED IN SCRIPTURE

- A. The Bible does not record all the possible experiences that the Spirit gives. It records examples of experiences that point to broader categories that are typical of how the Spirit works. John wrote of this principle, explaining that not all the works of Jesus were recorded in Scripture (Jn. 21:25). Manifestations that are *not* recorded in Scripture do not necessarily contradict those that *are* recorded! Some are an expansion of the things Jesus did which *were* recorded in Scripture.
- B. As long as manifestations do not dishonor or contradict the purpose of Scripture, they should not automatically be disregarded as non-biblical. Some wrongly conclude that all manifestations are non-biblical unless they can find an *exact* description of it in the Bible. However, in the realm of healing, we do not conclude that God can heal only diseases mentioned in Scripture.
- C. We cannot assume that manifestations are false because we do not find an exact biblical description for each experience. Why? Because it was not necessarily the purpose of the biblical writers to provide a comprehensive list of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit.
- D. Manifestations today must be in clear accordance with biblical precedents and principles. The Spirit works in ways that are in agreement with His character and principles seen in the Bible.
- E. The principle is that whatever manifestation is not disallowed in Scripture or contradictory to Scripture *is permissible* as long it bears godly fruit in the lives of those who experience it. This is not contradictory to the principle of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), because it upholds the purposes of God as set forth in Scripture. We are not required to proof-text every manifestation.
- F. Because some manifestations are in Scripture, they are repeatable, yet without necessarily being normative. We are not to teach these manifestations as the “main and plain” commandments of Scripture. We are not to teach these as something all must do to be a mature believer.

IV. PURPOSES OF THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. ***The fruit of manifestations:*** Fruit should be seen in the lives of believers—greater intimacy with God; impartations of love, peace, joy, and the fear of God; freedom from bondages (fear, anger, bitterness, pain, lust, etc.); physical healings and emotional healing; empowering for ministry (healing the sick, prophesying, intercession, etc.); refreshment, all leading to more evangelism.
- B. ***Manifestation as signs:*** God sometimes uses a manifestation as a sign to others so that we will pay attention to what the Spirit is saying. When the Spirit gives a sign, we ask what that specific sign means. How is the Spirit using it to win the lost and/or build up the Church?
- C. The signs point to our need for a deeper connection with the Spirit. Manifestations, healing, and other spiritual signs are like a billboard that declares that God is working. A manifestation is a sign only if it signifies what which helps spread the gospel and builds up the kingdom by spiritually strengthening the lives of God’s people.

V. HOW DO WE EXPLAIN THESE PHENOMENA?

- A. Manifestations are human responses to encountering God’s immediate presence. Manifestations are a physical or emotional ***response to the Spirit’s activity*** rather than being directly caused by the Spirit. People react to the presence of the Spirit in a similar way to how they react to touching an electric wire! When our all-powerful God touches our weak human frame it impacts us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. For example, falling under the power of the Spirit occurs when our physical control is temporarily suspended by encountering the Holy Spirit.
- B. When God touches the natural world there is often a reaction that is “super” (or “above”) nature—it is supernatural. Our frail bodies are sometimes powerfully affected by God’s presence. The glory of God affects the physical body beyond its capabilities, with spiritual encounters resulting in strange physical behavior. Physical manifestations occur when God increases the release of His manifest presence.
- C. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “The Holy Spirit affects the whole person. Man is body, soul, and spirit, and we cannot divide these. Man reacts as a whole. It is folly to expect that he can react in the realm of the spiritual without anything at all happening to the rest of him, to the soul, and to the body. These phenomena are indications of the fact that a powerful stimulus is in operation, that the very physical frame is involved.” He argued that such strange phenomena are a means that God uses to get our attention. God shakes us to wake us up (Eph. 5:14).

VI. TESTING MANIFESTATIONS

- A. We must test all things by looking at the fruit of how it affects our lifestyle. We must all examine everything in the light of Scripture. We test all things to discern if these reactions are from God, the flesh, or the devil. We test them by seeing whether they honor the Scripture and bear godly fruit in people’s lives.

²¹Test all things; hold fast what is good. (1 Thes. 5:21)

¹⁶“You will know them by their fruits...¹⁷Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit...²⁰Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” (Mt. 7:10-20)

¹¹They [the Bereans] received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:10-11)

- B. We are exhorted to test the spirits, to discern the spirit behind a teaching and its fruit.

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 Jn. 4:1)

- C. In 1741 Jonathan Edwards wrote *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*. He called his readers to evaluate the awakening by looking past the enthusiastic behavior to see the fruit. He wrote of five distinguishing marks of the Spirit's work. He stated that Satan would not counterfeit activities that led to these responses. If we can answer yes to these then we should regard the manifestation as genuine even if it is unfamiliar to us.
 1. Does it bring honor to the person of Jesus Christ?
 2. Does it produce a greater hatred of sin and a greater love for righteousness?
 3. Does it produce a greater regard for Scripture?
 4. Does it lead people into truth?
 5. Does it produce a greater love for God and man?
- D. One criterion for helping us determine whether a manifestation is the work of the Spirit is what results from it. It's not about whether we fall down, but rather what happens after we get up.
- E. Manifestations are not in themselves marks of spirituality; nor do they in themselves guarantee spiritual growth. The confirmation that a manifestation is of the Spirit is seen in good fruit.
- F. Is there a new love, humility, and holiness? Is there more fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, and gentleness? Is there good fruit in the overall ministry, or is the leader's focus on exalting Jesus or getting money or trying to showcase how much power they have? Are people receiving training in the faith? Is there pastoral oversight? Are people growing in the fruit of the Spirit?

VII. EXPOSING FALSE EQUATIONS ABOUT THE MANIFESTATIONS

- A. ***False equation #1:*** *If a manifestation is genuine it will always bring lasting fruit and change.* Scripture has many examples of people who stumble after encountering God in a powerful way.
- B. ***False equation #2:*** *If you are sensitive to the Spirit you will be touched in the ways others are.* Yes, some people quench the Spirit because of being closed with unbelief, fear, and pride. It is also true that many with fear, pride, or unbelief have encountered the Spirit in powerful ways.
- C. ***False equation #3:*** *If the Spirit touches you then you will not have any control over your actions.* Sometimes the Spirit touches someone in a physical way that is beyond their control. However, usually He works within the context of human responses. In other words, if the person continues to yield, more will usually happen. For example, a person who is laughing as a result of being touched by the Spirit can usually choose to stop or continue. There is usually an element of control on the human side, but, even still, there remains an ability to "pull out" of the experience. There are exceptions to this general rule.
- D. ***False equation #4:*** *If I were more committed to Jesus I would receive more manifestations.* Receiving manifestations of the Spirit is not a sign of commitment or spiritual maturity. The manifestations of the Spirit are freely received by faith, not by earning them.

⁵Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal. 3:5)
- E. ***False equation #5:*** *If you do not fall down then you are unspiritual or resisting the Spirit.*

VIII. EXPOSING DANGERS REGARDING THE MANIFESTATIONS

- A. ***Imitation***: Some will imitate the manifestations through the power of suggestion or the desire to be seen as more spiritual than others. Some continue with a fleshly imitation after they have had a true manifestation of God's presence. We are to embrace the Spirit's touch on our emotions without emotionalism, which speaks of the exaggeration and manipulation of our emotions.
- B. ***Exalting outward manifestations***: Some exalt outward manifestations above the inward work of the Spirit in one's heart. Transformation into the image of Jesus is the Spirit's highest goal in His work. We must keep our focus on Jesus rather than on outward manifestations, which are merely signs of His presence. We do not seek manifestations in themselves, but a deeper life in God.
- C. ***Pride***: We must avoid the proud, or narrow, judgmental thinking of the haves and have-nots.
- D. ***Fanaticism***: Some get carried away in excesses of unbiblical behavior and ideas. A true move of the Spirit will always be attended by some "wild fire." We must not lay aside all restraints in the name of "the liberty of the Spirit."
- E. ***Neglect***: Some neglect foundational issues in our faith because of giving undue attention to the manifestations themselves; for example, our prayer life, serving others, building our families and honoring our parents, loving our enemies, helping the poor, going to work, paying our bills, resolving relational conflicts, and being faithful friends.
- F. ***Exalting people***: Some overly exalt the weak human vessels that God anoints in His work. We must honor leaders, without undue adulation of them.