

The Gift of the Spirit

Introduction:

1. Like the "indwelling of the Holy Spirit," this particular subject is not without its controversy;
2. There are no less than four positions as to precisely what constitutes the "gift of the Holy Spirit"; we will, in this lesson, examine what I consider to be the meaning of the words in Acts 2:38
3. There are some who argue that the "gift of the HS" is the Holy Spirit Himself
 - (1) This particular view is held by those who believe in the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and actually serves as an additional argument for the personal indwelling;
 - (2) First, this position was held by some of the pioneer scholars (though by no means the majority of those men)
 - (3) Second, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to all believers, John 7:37-39;
 - (4) Third, according to Acts 2:38 as many as repented and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit AS a gift;
 - (5) Fourth, all who belong to Christ have the Spirit; Romans 8:9;
 - (6) Fifth, Acts 5:32 says God gives the Holy Spirit to them that obey him;
 - (7) Sixth, 1 Corinthians 6:19 says every Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
 - (8) Seventh, Paul says the HS "is in you" (Rom. 8:9-11).
 - (9) The one weakness in this argument is the presupposed idea that the Spirit dwells in the Christian personally; such a position would demand that some reference be given as to when and to whom that indwelling was given, hence the personal indwelling view;
 - (10) It also appears to me that those who believe in these two doctrines (i.e. the personal indwelling, and that the gift of the HS is the HS himself) tend to fall prey to circular reasoning:
 - A. They reason that the "gift of the HS" is the Holy Spirit himself, because so many passages plainly teach that the HS is given to us; ie. The passages above;
 - B. When asked why they believe that the HS indwells personally, they cite Acts 2:38;
4. I will present now what I believe to be the truth on this passage: that the "gift of the HS" is the miraculous gifts promised to that first century church;

DISCUSSION:

I. WHY DO I TAKE THIS POSITION?

1. First, *the message was first given in the first century in the framework of the miraculous:*
 - (1) It must be remembered that this message was spoken to first century Christians, not *twenty first century Christians*;
 - (2) That being the case, it was *in the framework of miraculous activity*; on that occasion in Acts 2 there was Holy Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues, inspiration;
 - (3) While objectors might say, "We should take the passage in its normal and natural meaning"
 - (4) But, this ignores a very vital and fundamental factor: *How did the initial audience understand it? Seeing that they were in the very midst of miraculous might, how would they have understood the meaning of the words, "Gift of the HS"?*
 - (5) Instead of trying to place the Pentecostal audience into our 21st century setting, we should seek to place ourselves into the 1st century setting! We do this with other ancient documents; why not the NT?
2. This view is supported by the weight of the Greek term 'dorean' in this passage:
 - (1) In Acts 8:20 Peter used this term: "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." Was this miraculous or non-miraculous?
 - (2) Acts 10:45 – cf. with Acts 11:17 where the term is used by Peter to describe what came upon Cornelius and his household is this word 'dorean';
 - (3) Ephesians 3:7, Paul uses the word 'dorean' to refer to "effectual working of his power" when addressing the miraculous gift conferred upon him as an apostle;

- (4) Ephesians 4:7 – this same term is used to refer to the miraculous gifts given unto men;
 - (5) It is amazing that in all of these passages where the word ‘*dorean*’ is used it is miraculous, *with the lone exception of Acts 2:38 where some think it refers to the ordinary, non-miraculous gift*;
3. The expression “gift of the Holy Spirit” appears only twice in the NT:
- (1) Acts 10:45 in the household of Cornelius;
 - (2) Acts 2:38 at Pentecost
 - (3) Notice: both instances were surrounded by the miraculous; both passages speak of the first time the gospel was offered to each class of individuals – Acts 2 to Jews; Acts 10 to Gentiles; in both instances Peter uses the same words to describe something specific;
 - (4) Yet, we are to believe that one was the *miraculous* while the other was *non-miraculous*?
4. The weight of the word *receive*:
- (1) Peter uses the word “receive” in Acts 2:38;
 - (2) Yet, “receive” is used with frequency in the NT where miraculous activity involving the HS is evident;
 - (3) Jesus used the word in John 7:39 (which in my estimation, is a promise of the HS, not some “ordinary” gift of the HS); the same Greek word, ‘*lambano*’ translates our English “receive”
 - (4) John 20:22 uses the word, both Greek and English;
 - (5) Acts 8:15-17, a passage with an obvious miraculous setting;
 - (6) Acts 10:47, again the word is used in reference to miraculous activity;
 - (7) Acts 19:2, when Paul asked, “received he the HS” the same word appears;
 - (8) Galatians 3:2, a passage that clearly refers to the miraculous powers, the same word, *lambano*’ is used;
 - (9) 1 John 2:27, the same Greek word appears;
 - (10) The point is this: Since “receive” (or ‘*lambano*’) is used to convey instances in the original text where the miraculous was received, it seems highly conclusive that such is the significance in Acts 2:38.
 - (11) In a search with ESwor, every instance where ‘*lambano*’ is used in connection with the words *Holy Spirit*, the context is always miraculous, unless Acts 2:38 is an exception;
5. Finally, *the fact that all twelve of the apostles were there and could thus impart this power to the new disciples*:
- (1) Here were people assembled from the four corners of the world;
 - (2) Soon, they would be returning to their homes (it should be noted that when we get to Acts 8, that it took the persecution to “scatter” the disciples)
 - (3) When they left, they would not all be able to take an apostle with them;
 - (4) Seeing that the miracles were designed to confirm the word, it seems more advantageous that these new Christians be provided the miraculous gifts before they left Jerusalem than it would be for the apostles to travel far and wide after they had left.
 - (5) As to why none but the apostles had the miraculous gifts prior to Acts 7, it may have been due to several factors:
 - A. The apostles may have deemed it important to give due consideration as to precisely whom these gifts would be bestowed;
 - B. IT may be that the gifts were not given until it was known certain ones would be going forth to preach the word (cf. Stephen, Phillip, etc);
 - C. Seeing that there were certain offices that possessed these gifts (cf. Eph. 4:7-14), it is reasonable that there would be a period of time between the *promise* in Acts 2 and the actual bestowal of those gifts in Acts 7 and following;
 - (6) If someone argues that the task of “laying on of hands” by twelve apostles for nearly 3,000 new Christians would prove a laborious task, we would respond, “How much more difficult would it have been for these apostles to lay there hands on these new disciples after they had returned to their home land to preach? Also, 12 men, working six hours a day, and

bestowing gifts to new Christians at the rate of 20 per hour (assuming that this rate might be applied) would amount to more than 240 people per day, or in ten days, 2400 people could have received the miraculous gifts.

II. THE REASONABLNESS OF THIS VIEW:

1. While we realize that you cannot establish a view by mere “reason,” when coupled with an abundant of scriptural evidence, it serves to strengthen the arguments presented;
2. First, *it is more reasonable to conclude that Acts 2:38 is miraculous in its scope that is the ordinary indwelling of the Spirit; the circumstances demand the miraculous rather than the ordinary;*
3. Second, *there is full harmony between Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16-20.* We have no difficulty understanding the limited nature of the promise in Mark 16:16-20; by the same token there is no difficulty in understanding the limited nature of Acts 2:38 if indeed it is miraculous;

CONCLUSION:

1. This position is not “novel” or “new”
2. It was held by the late Guy N. Woods, H.Leo Boles, Franklin Camp, and others;
3. It is my studied conviction that the promise in Acts 2:38 was a promise that those who obeyed the gospel would be provided the ability to confirm the word upon returning to their home land to preach and practice their new found faith.