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HOW THE BORN-AGAIN BELIEVER RECEIVES THE HOLY SPIRIT

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 77
ACTS 19:1-4

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ACTS 19:1-4 "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 Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 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."

This is the last of the Pentecosts recorded in the Book of the Acts. The first Pentecost was recorded in Acts 2 and is the beginning of the Church Age. Yet in the first Pentecost we find that only Jews were involved. Was the Church Age going to be only for Jews? The answer to that question came in the Gentile Pentecost which is described in Acts 9. This second Pentecost showed that Gentiles have equal rights with the Jews in the Church Age. Then, what about the people who were half-Jew and half-Gentile? This question was answered in the Pentecost which took place in Samaria, when these were converted just as the others. Now the question before us here is this--What about the Old Testament saints who lived long enough to live over into the new dispensation, the dispensation of the church? This question will be answered in the scripture we now have before us.

ACTS 19:1 "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" Paul has now arrived in Ephesus. In our last study Paul was urged to stay in Ephesus, but he moved on, leaving Priscilla and Aquila there to instruct Apollos in New Testament theology. Apollos would soon move on to Corinth to minister to the church there, and at this time Paul pays a short visit to Ephesus. God's traffic pattern for his people is perfect. If men are willing, God will fit them into his plan at the right time and in the right place. Paul passed through the upper coast, not stopping to work at other places, so he could arrive at the exact moment in the place where God wanted him. So everything dovetailed perfectly, and Apollos moved on to his new work in Corinth as the ground was being prepared for Paul's great work in Ephesus. The word "Came" is aorist, active, infinitive and means it was God's specific purpose for him to come to Ephesus at that time. Ephesus will soon become the center of the Christian world. Once Jerusalem was the center, but the saints in Jerusalem became legalistic and God passed them by and the Christian center moved to Antioch. Now the center of the Christian world will move from Antioch to Ephesus, and from this new center Christian influence will flow out to the whole world. The city of Ephesus had a beautiful harbor, and from this harbor led a super highway up to the city. The highway was seventy feet wide and was lined with beautiful marble statues. In Ephesus was a great open-air theatre carved out of solid rock and it would seat 25,000. Those who performed there said the acoustics were absolutely amazing. Ephesus was the city of the Temple of Artemas or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This temple had 120 pillars, each having been dedicated to a different king or prince. Ephesus was the capitol of the Roman Province of Asia. It was indeed the crossroads of the ancient world.

We read that when Paul arrived he "found certain disciples there". So he didn't go to the Jewish synagogue, as had been his custom in the past, but he began to work with the Christians who were already in Ephesus. They had been saved in the Old Testament dispensation but had lived over into the Church Age and they were now to be integrated into that age.

ACTS 19:2 "He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Paul knew their training and background and he asked them a very important question. Please notice the difference in translation. The King James version says, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed" but the Greek says, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit WHEN you believed?" "Receive the Holy Spirit" and "When you believed" are both aorist participles and this indicates that the time they believed and the time they received the Holy Spirit was one and the same.

Now in Old Testament times the Holy Spirit just indwelt a few believers. In that dispensation the Holy Spirit indwelt certain people to empower them for certain tasks. The Holy Spirit indwelt Joseph and helped him to be the prime minister of Egypt. Exodus 28:3 tells how the Holy Spirit indwelt certain priests and empowered them to fashion the Tabernacle and the royal garments of the High Priests. So in the Old Testament dispensation the Holy Spirit indwelt people to empower them for certain tasks. The elders who assisted Moses in administration were filled with the Holy Spirit as described in Numbers 11:17. In Numbers 27:18 we read how God put his Holy Spirit upon Joshua and empowered him for his task. Gideon by nature was a coward and we at first find him hiding in a cave. He was from the worst tribe, and from the family called the worst in the tribe, and Gideon was the worst member of his family. Now you just can't get much worse than that. Gideon placed God in the position to give him some signs, and God accommodated him because God knew of his weakness. But God placed his Holy Spirit upon Gideon and he became a brave and effective leader. The same was true of Samson, who was a very wicked man for a time, but the Lord placed his Holy Spirit upon him and he defeated the Philistines. Three passages in Judges 14 and 15 and 16 tell how Samson was indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Let us now get six points concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

1. IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES PEOPLE WERE GIVEN THE HOLY SPIRIT SO THEY COULD ACCOMPLISH CERTAIN TASKS.

This has been documented by the passages listed above. In 1 Samuel 16 the story is told of how King Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit so he might be empowered to be King over Israel.

2. IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES THE BELIEVER COULD LOSE THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In 1 Samuel 16:14 we read that King Saul lost the Holy Spirit. In Psalm 51:11 David prayed that the Lord would not take the Holy Spirit from him.

3. IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES THE BELIEVER COULD OBTAIN THE HOLY SPIRIT BY ASKING FOR HIM.

Elisha asked for the Holy Spirit in 2 Kings 2:9-10. In Luke 11:12 Jesus encouraged the disciples to ask for the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "The Father will give the Spirit to them that ask him". But you remember, they didn't ask for the Holy Spirit and all of them were caught flatfooted and ran away and deserted Christ at his crucifixion, all except John. Just before He ascended Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit". He did this, knowing that they would not make it for the next ten days if they did not have the Holy Spirit. Then at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came in a new way and has been given to every believer since that time.

4. THE GIVING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE DISCIPLES WAS JUST A FORERUNNER OF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO ALL BELIEVERS TEN DAYS LATER AT PENTECOST.

5. ONCE THE CHURCH AGE BEGAN EVERY BELIEVER HAD THE HOLY SPIRIT.

JOHN 7:39 "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" Christ had not yet been glorified so the Holy Spirit had not been given.

JOHN 16:14 "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." The Holy Spirit was given for the purpose of glorifying Jesus Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

ROMANS 8:9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." So the separating point was Christ being glorified and being seated at the right hand of God.

The ministering of the Holy Spirit during the Tribulation will go back to the same pattern as that which pertained during the age of Israel. The reason for this is that the Tribulation is the completion of the age of Israel. Then in the millennium every believer will be indwelt with the Holy Spirit.

During the Church Age the Holy Spirit has a ministry to us before conversion and this is to convict us of sin. In 1 Cor. 2:14 the unbeliever is called the soulish man. The unsaved man's spirit has been blacked out by sin. So the Holy Spirit has to double and do the work the human spirit would ordinarily do and convict the unbeliever of sin. The Holy Spirit makes the Gospel clear. Regeneration is the salvation ministry of the Holy Spirit. However, in the Church Age some other things are added. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit during the Church Age is the thing that has been added. The sealing of the Holy Spirit and the giving of spiritual gifts to all believers is something new in the Church Age. All this happens at the point of salvation.

So here in Ephesus Paul looked at these believers and said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They replied that they didn't even know that the Holy Spirit existed. So immediately Paul knew that these were Old Testament believers who have lived over into the Church Age. Undoubtedly this was true in many other places in the world, and this incident would establish a principle for others to follow.

ACTS 19:3 "And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism." Paul then asked them on what basis did they receive baptism? They replied that they were baptized with John's baptism. Now John's message of salvation and Paul's message of salvation were identical. John's baptism was a ritual baptism in water, performed by John. John indicated by this that the candidate had believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour, and the baptism indicated that the believer was identified with Christ's kingdom. The one exception to this was the baptism of Jesus, and all that the baptism of Jesus meant was that Jesus was willing to do the will of His Father. Remember, the baptism of Jesus was entirely unique, and no one can ever be baptized as Jesus was.

There are four dry baptisms in the Scripture. Remember, that baptism means IDENTIFICATION.

The four dry baptisms are--The Baptism of Moses, the Baptism of fire, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the Baptism of the cup. So the real question Paul was asking these believers in Ephesus was this--Did you receive a dry baptism when you believed, in other words, were you identified with the Holy Spirit when you believed?

ACTS 19:4 "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." This means that John baptized you with the baptism that is characterized by repentance. When John baptized he baptized only those people who had changed their minds about Jesus. It meant a complete change of mental attitude. In order to be saved you have to change your mind about Christ and turn and believe in him. You can't be saved by feeling sorry for your sins. Feeling sorry for your sins may impress you and people around you but it doesn't impress God. Emotionalism and sincerity are human works and human works get you nowhere with God as far as salvation is concerned.

So all one can do to be saved is to come to the cross and believe in what God had provided. Name your sins to God and leave them at the foot of the cross. You can't help God forgive your sins by anything you do, not by crying, not by emotionalism, not by joining a church or being baptized, not by anything. God did all the work at the cross and we simply accept what he did for us. Remember, you can't help God save yourself. John's baptism was something that was administered to those who had changed their minds about Christ. We will complete this section in our next study.