



## **“This is Not That”**

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There are many things that people attribute to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. He is given credit for most doctrines that are taught, most movements that are begun, and most decisions that are made in religious people’s lives. The Holy Spirit was sent to the apostles and the early church soon after Jesus ascended back to heaven. We read about Him pouring out His power on them in **Acts 2**, the day the church of Christ had its beginning in this world. That was a marvelous day. The events that took place were so convincing and powerful that at least three thousand people were willing to listen to Peter preach the saving gospel of Christ, and they were baptized, saved, and added to the church.

It all began when the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles in the beginning of **Acts 2**. They began to speak in other languages or tongues, and some did not understand and accused them of being drunk. But Peter said that the things that they were then witnessing were actually the fulfillment of prophecy. In other words, they could know that this was orchestrated by God because the Old Testament prophets long before had prophesied of that day, and of these things that they were now seeing take place.

**Acts 2:14-16 “But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;”**

Peter says *what you now see is what Joel—hundreds of years ago—prophesied would happen*. They were seeing the beginning of a great outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the early church, which would result in the gospel being preached and multitudes being saved before judgment came. *This is that*, he says.

Today, there are many fantastic claims made about the Holy Spirit and His work, and when you compare them with what the scriptures actually teach about the Spirit’s mission, medium and message, you quickly come to see that this is NOT that.

About 800 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Joel foretold a time of blessing and a time of judgment to come. In **Joel 2**, he prophesied that before God’s judgment was unleashed, His Spirit would first be poured out, in order to save people from the promised judgment. In other words, the gospel of Christ would be preached by the power and influence of the Spirit before God’s judgment came to unbelievers.

**Joel 2:28-32 “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”**

There is much that could be said about that prophecy, but in short, *God’s Spirit* refers to *the Holy Spirit*. *All flesh* obviously doesn’t refer to every human being on the earth, but rather refers to *people of all races*—Jew and Gentile—and without distinction: young and old, rich and poor, male and female. In other words, people of every tongue, tribe and walk of life would benefit from this work of the Spirit in the latter days, speaking of the gospel dispensation: the end of the Jewish age and the beginning of the gospel age. Salvation would be offered to ALL before destruction came.

800 years later, on the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter quoted Joel’s prophecy and says, *this is what you are now seeing. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16)*. The apostles were speaking in languages that they had never learned before. This was obviously a miraculous happening, and people were amazed by the sign. Under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter—who himself did not understand the gospel message only a few days before—now, with great authority, stands and opens his mouth and preaches the first sermon about the crucified and risen Christ. As a result, three thousand people are led to obey the gospel and be saved.

Jesus had also promised that the Holy Spirit would be given to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. He looked forward to the same thing Joel did. Jesus told them exactly why they would be given the Holy Spirit and what He would do when they received Him.

**Mark 13:10-11 “And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.”**

In other words, the coming of the Holy Spirit would equip and inspire the apostles with the revelation of Christ, and the very words they would need to communicate that message to the world. That’s why the scriptures are *divinely inspired*, you see. The Bible is not a human book even though it was written down by human hands. Those men were inspired by the Holy Spirit to infallibly speak and write what they did. Jesus told His apostles of the Holy Spirit’s coming.

**John 16:7-14 “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away (speaking of His death, burial and resurrection): for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto**

**you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”**

What accomplished all of those things that Jesus said the Spirit would do? It was the gospel that the Spirit inspired these men to preach. Here, and in **John 14:26**, Jesus is promising the Holy Spirit or paraclete unto these apostles in a special way, a special measure, a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit, that was going to uniquely qualify and equip them as the apostles of Jesus Christ, to reveal the gospel to the world. That’s why the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them. The events of **Acts 2** that the Jews witnessed in the apostles, and then later the same kind of sign that others saw when the Holy Spirit was poured out in a similar fashion on Cornelius and his Gentile household in **Acts 10**, served as evidence that what was being preached was indeed from God. And that those who obeyed that preaching were indeed being saved.

That leads us to ask: *what about the many claims that people make about the Holy Spirit today?* And there are many. Most things we see and hear in religion today are attributed to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, it seems. Oftentimes people will even point to the miraculous events of **Acts 2** and **Acts 10** that were brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit, and use that as evidence for what the Holy Spirit is supposedly doing in and through them. But is that so? It’s very important that we carefully compare. Is *this* which we see today *that* which Joel prophesied and what we see being fulfilled in **Acts 2**? I contend, No. In fact, far from it.

Let’s consider some things that the Holy Spirit does NOT do. First of all, the Holy Spirit was not given to establish a ministry for Himself. His purpose was not to shine the spotlight upon Himself or exalt Himself. Make no mistake: the Holy Spirit is God. He is a part of the Godhead or trinity, if you want to use that descriptive term. Therefore, He is worthy of our respect and our praise. But the Holy Spirit’s mission to earth was not to come and exalt Himself or to focus everyone upon Himself; His mission to earth was to focus men upon Jesus. More specifically, the salvation that Jesus brought to earth in the gospel.

**John 16:14 “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”**

The Holy Spirit was the power and influence by whom the gospel would be preached, pointing men to Jesus. When a man claims to have a ministry or a message that he attributes to the Holy Spirit, and he claims that the Holy Spirit is allegedly doing something to or through him and that becomes the focus of his ministry, you can immediately know that that is not what Joel nor Jesus was pointing to.

The point of miracles was not the miracles themselves. The point of miracles was not merely the power of the Holy Spirit Himself. The point of miracles, which were performed by the power of the Holy Spirit, was to confirm that the messenger was speaking the message of truth and salvation. Even Jesus did not perform miracles merely to make people well or whole again. The miracle wasn’t the point. That is not to say that Jesus did not have compassion upon those for whom He worked the miracles—certainly He did. But the overarching purpose of every miracle was to prove that He was the Christ.

**John 20:30-31 “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”**

Then, of the apostles of Christ, the Hebrew writer said this:

**Hebrews 2:3-4 “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”**

You see, the signs and wonders given were for the purpose of confirming the message the apostles were given by the Holy Spirit to preach. When Paul wrote to the troubled church at Corinth and rebuked them for their misuse and misunderstanding of miraculous gifts, he said this:

**I Corinthians 14:22 “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not:”**

They were a sign. Miracles were merely meant to be signs to those who would believe evidence that the message they were hearing was truly from the Lord.

So, do men today possess that same power? That’s a very good question. Let’s look at a passage in **Hebrews** again.

**Hebrews 2:4 “God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”**

The works of the Holy Spirit were to *bear them witness*. Why did they need that witness? Because they claimed to be speaking as God was inspiring them to speak. Anyone could make the claim that God was leading them to say something, but the gifts of the Holy Spirit bore witness to the fact that they indeed were speaking on behalf of the Lord. Today, people claim that the Holy Spirit speaks through them, but if that be the case, as goes the claim, so should go the demonstration. If a person is going to claim that the Holy Spirit has spoken through him, he should have the power to work a miracle in order to prove it because that was the purpose of miracles within the apostles in the early church.

Not only that, but these gifts were only imparted by the apostles laying hands on the recipient.

**Acts 8:18 “And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,”**

No one else had that power, otherwise they wouldn’t have had to send for apostles to come down there to Samaria and lay hands on these new converts. Nobody had that power except for the apostles of Jesus. The apostles of Christ are no longer with us, so who has the ability to impart that power by the laying on of hands? The Bible only attributes that power to the apostles.

Miracles not only bore witness to the authority of the apostles and the veracity of their message, but they also extended their ministry. What I mean by that is, as the gospel was preached and churches were established, the apostles would lay hands on some in those places and impart the gifts that they

would need to be able to edify the church since they did not yet have the complete revelation of Christ given unto them. Paul speaks of these miraculous gifts in his letter to the Corinthian church.

**I Corinthians 13:8-12** “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues (speaking of the miraculous ability to speak in other languages which they had never studied), they shall cease; whether there be knowledge (speaking of knowledge that is divinely imparted), it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part (The church at that time only had what revelation had thus far been given; they didn’t have all of it). But when that which is perfect (meaning complete) is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

These supernatural gifts that we read about in **Acts 2** and that we then see proliferated through the early church by the laying on of the apostles’ hands served a purpose that was unique to that time, when the revelation of Jesus Christ was in the process of being first made known and written down and thus preserved for the church of all ages to come, and now that *that which is perfect is come, those things that are in part shall be done away*. They have been done away.

The complete revelation now gives us all that we need, to know the mind of Christ. So, the powers of the Holy Spirit originally poured out upon the apostles on the Day of Pentecost and then given to Christians by the laying on of those apostles’ hands confirmed the revelation in the process of being given. Therefore, when men today promote themselves as healers and miracle workers who are sent out to take away your sicknesses and other problems in life, and they claim they are ‘Holy Ghost ministries’ using Him to supposedly take away people’s debts or promise prosperity to people, you need to understand that they are misusing the name of the Holy Spirit and you can know that this is not that. Secondly, the Holy Spirit does not guide men apart from the revelation that He already gave. There should be a red flag when anybody claims to you that the Holy Spirit has led them into something that they have not read and studied in God’s word.

**Jude 3** “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Why did he say that? Why was that such an urgent message to them? Look at **verse 4**.

**Jude 4** “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

These false teachers of false doctrines who were trying to lead them away from the faith that had been given to them by the apostles. They were trying to bring something new and strange to them, and Jude told them to *contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*. I’m told that the original language is better translated *once for all or once for all time delivered unto the saints*. Today, we see many who claim to be led by the Spirit. They attribute feelings, hunches, intuitions, dreams, visions and voices to the supposed leading or prompting of the Holy Spirit. But Jude precludes any kind of revelations beyond what was originally revealed in the New Testament.

Some say *yes, but the Holy Spirit never leads me to do anything that would contradict the word of God. How do you know? Well, I test it by the Bible and if it's against the Bible, then the Holy Spirit didn't lead me to say it or do it or preach it.* Well, if that's the case, why does one need a miraculous revelation or leading from the Holy Spirit? Why not just resolve to follow the Bible which the Holy Spirit already gave us?

Some people claim that we need the Holy Spirit's direct and miraculous intervention in order to interpret and understand the scriptures. But did the Holy Spirit really fail to make it intelligible when He originally gave it? What makes the Bible confusing and hard to understand for many is NOT an absence of the Holy Spirit, but a willing blindness to what He has already said. Paul told the church at Thessalonica that people are deluded because they don't love the truth, that they otherwise might be saved. It's a heart problem that prevents them from understanding the Bible, and not a revelation problem.

Friend, the fact is that everything the Holy Spirit has said to do by way of teaching, guiding and instructing the Christian can also be said of the gospel or the word of the New Testament, which the Holy Spirit gave. Just take out a piece of paper and make a list. What does the Bible say that the Holy Spirit does, so far as instructing, leading, guiding or teaching the Christian? Or leading the sinner to salvation, which necessitates hearing the gospel and obeying it? I propose that everything you can write down that He reveals or does to a person concerning their salvation, their sanctification can also be said of the gospel that the Holy Spirit gave. When one claims some revelation, teaching or practice based on what the Holy Spirit allegedly led him/her to say or do, you can know that this is not that which we read about in the book of **Acts**.

Finally, the Holy Spirit does not cause people to lose control of themselves. That's not what Joel was referring to. We hear phrases today like *slain in the Spirit*, where a preacher will lay hands on a person or perhaps breathe on them and the person then falls to the ground and rolls around, or sometimes will run through the building jumping pews or behaving erratically, claiming they are under the control or influence of the Holy Spirit. My friend, the Holy Spirit never caused anyone to do anything of the sort. There is not a single word in the New Testament of the Holy Spirit giving people convulsions or making them lose control or act in an emotional or wild manner. You never read of the Holy Spirit making members of the early church cry, laugh or exhibit any other kind of emotion as evidence of a feeling or spiritual influence. In fact, when Paul regulated the use of miraculous or spiritual gifts in the church at Corinth, he commanded that *all things be done decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:40)*. Those words in the Greek mean *gracefully, with decorum, with regular order* and so forth. When one spoke in tongues, it was to be interpreted so it could be understood. The church was to be edified from the use of these gifts. It's a shame when people attribute wild and emotionally driven behavior that even violates the order and decorum that Paul demanded in the church's assembly to the Holy Spirit. If we want to honor the Holy Spirit, let us keep, believe and obey what He has told us to do in the word of God.

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