

1. God Unites All Those Who Believe in Jesus Christ into One New Humanity
 - a. He does this by granting *all* who receive Him His own Holy Spirit in fullness
 - i. The overwhelming revelation of the Scriptures regarding the Holy Spirit is that God grants to ALL who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, whom He has called, the gift of His Holy Spirit in fullness
 1. You see this in Acts 2:38-39 as Peter promised that all who received Jesus and were baptized would “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”
 2. The referents of this promise is clarified immediately, “everyone whom the Lord God calls to Himself.”
 - a. As John Stott puts it, “The promise of God is co-extensive with the call of God. Whomever receives the divine call receives the divine promise.” (Baptism and Fullness, p28)
 3. All believers are anointed with the Holy Spirit equally
 - a. This also means that there is no “special anointing” of the Holy Spirit which empowers certain Christians with “more Holy Spirit power” than other Christians
 - i. Such distinction and hierarchy is idolatrous
 - b. Celebrity pastors, charismatic “anointing”
 - i. The only time “anointed by the Holy One” is used of Christians is when it refers to all Christians (2 Cor 1:22-23; 1 John 2:20,27)
 - ii. It particularly relates to the teaching that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22)
 - ii. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the validating indication of God’s seal of salvation through faith
 1. **2 Cor 1:22** – “God sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge”
 2. **Eph 1:13-14** – “in Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”
 3. **Eph 4:30** – “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”
 - iii. The report that the Samaritans had “received the Word” needed to be verified for the Jerusalem church
 - b. This unity must be expressed by the Church, according to the gospel
 - i. As it is, this universality of God’s promised Holy Spirit upon “all who are far off” needed to be exemplified when the gospel was received outside of Judea
 1. The Jerusalem believers sent an apostolic delegation when they heard of the conversion of the Samaritans
 - a. The apostles prayed for the Samaritans, indicating their dependence upon God, not as something to be manipulated, but as someone, distinct from Creation, to whom to appeal
 - b. This is a central distinction between prayer and “magic”
 - i. Prayer entreats a person who may say “no” and whom I trust when He does (Garden of Gethsemane, Matt 26)
 - ii. Magic manipulates a power who is *obligated* to deliver *if the performance was correct*
 - ii. Why did they, then, not receive the Holy Spirit when they believed?
 1. First of all, the wording reveals the certainty that they would receive the Spirit
 - a. “not yet” fallen upon them – indicates certainty and yet a period of wanting
 - b. The implication, then, is that it was expected that they would receive the Holy Spirit *just as all other believers up to that point*
 2. It’s not because Philip’s proclamation was lacking, nor because the faith of the Samaritans was lacking some kind of quality

- a. Luke goes to quite great lengths to show their understanding and Philip's orthodoxy
 - b. Neither do the apostles, when they arrive, correct either Philip's teaching nor the Samaritan's 'quality' of faith
 - c. So, whatever the reason that the HS had not "fallen upon" them, it was not due to anything lacking in the faith of the Samaritans, the preaching of Stephen, or the performance of either of them
 - i. Some Christians use this passage to confirm their presupposition that unless somebody has a "Pentecost-like" experience of the HS, then he has not fallen upon them
 - ii. Then, however, they go beyond this very passage to try and posit *a reason why* the Spirit has not fallen upon modern believers in the same way
 1. It is usually some performance...and we're back to magic
 2. This usually creates a division between believers, classes of believers you might say, those who have had such an experience due to their quality of faith or proper performance...and those who have not
- iii. So, their faith was genuine and real, but the *evidence* of the validating seal was withheld
1. For what reason?
 2. For the reason that the Jewish Church might see the inclusion of the Samaritans as full heirs and receivers of the promises of God in Christ Jesus
 - a. This was a huge deal!
 - i. For the Samaritans, to be included in the promises of God given to the patriarchs, as equal heirs was a huge reality
 - ii. A history of animosity abolished by the gospel of grace
 1. For all come to God on the same exact basis: the righteousness of Christ Jesus, the Righteous One
 - b. There is also the very real possibility that a "Samaritan faction" may arise because of an assumed division between Samaritans and Jews
 - i. Every work and growth of the church up to this point was in Jerusalem
 - ii. The Samaritan conversions was an unprecedented event
 - iii. Thus, the apostolic delegation sent down to Samaria was a preemptive unifying endeavor to both proclaim unity in Jesus and verify unity in Jesus between Samaritans and Jews
 3. This is why the Church sends Peter and John – to investigate such a crazy idea that the Samaritans received the gospel and believed it!
 - a. What do you do with this? Are they included? What do they have to do?
 - b. These questions would continue as the Gentiles are progressively included by faith alone in Christ Jesus alone, and evidence of their inclusion, by God, will also be needed to verify for the Church the full inclusion of outsiders who believe in Jesus as the Christ.
 4. Note, too, that this is not a 'second blessing' of the Holy Spirit, or a 'second filling' – they had not received the Holy Spirit *at all*
 - a. Thus, they needed a 'first work' of the Holy Spirit, making this a very unique situation
 - b. As such, this is not an explanatory passage of how believers receive the Holy Spirit
 - i. Or else we would need the original apostles, not even Philips!, to lay their hands on all believers in order for them to receive the Holy Spirit
 - c. aorist tense of "to receive" indicates that this "falling upon" is a one-time event, not a continual or repeated event

- c. Thus, the unusual withholding of the Spirit from the Samaritan believers was so that the apostles could come and identify with them as having the same Spirit as those in Jerusalem
 - i. Remember that Philip was not one of the 12, and there could be confusion as to whether or not the Samaritans were the same as the Jews
 - 1. Again, the gospel destroys superiority and inferiority because the Spirit is granted to all who believe
- 2. God Unites All Those in Jesus by Giving Them His One and Same Spirit Through Hearing With Faith
 - a. What is the significance of the apostles “placing hands upon them”
 - i. Placing hands upon, or touching them, is a symbol of identification
 - 1. It is mentioned in connection with the authorization and commission of the 7 “deacons” (**Acts 6:6**)
 - a. Note, however, that the 7 men selected by the Church in Jerusalem for this ministry were already “full of the Spirit and wisdom”
 - b. Thus, the touching by the apostles did not confer the Spirit, nor did it have anything to do with “filling of the Spirit”
 - c. Rather, it was an identification of their ministry with the apostolic ministry, a symbol of oneness and participation
 - 2. It is mentioned in the authorization and commission of Barnabas and Saul as ambassadors to the Gentiles in Antioch (**Acts 13**)
 - 3. It is loosely connected with prayer in **Acts 9:12,17** and directly in **19:5-6**
 - ii. It is not magical. There is no skill to it, nor is there a ‘proper placement and manner’ associated with it, like it were magical.
 - 1. This is why Jesus never instructs his disciples “how” to lay hands on someone.
 - 2. It is not a technique, but a symbol of identification and mutuality together
 - 3. Thus, the Spirit had been poured out on Jewish believers in Jesus, and the Spirit is poured out on Samaritan believers *as one people*.
 - iii. This identification is seen in the OT practice of identifying the people’s sins with the sacrifice brought to the altar
 - 1. **Leviticus 1:4** – the identification for atonement of an individual
 - 2. **Leviticus 16:21** – the identification of the sins of the nation upon the scapegoat
 - iv. In fact, outside of the narrative *descriptions* in the gospels and Acts, it is not mentioned at all
 - 1. You would think that if it were an important ministry in the functioning of the Church, that the letters of instruction and correction and encouragement would have mentioned it
 - 2. We must be careful to build a doctrine of the Holy Spirit entirely dependent upon the narrative *descriptions* from the book of Acts.
 - a. They are frankly too disparate to construct a consistent principle
 - i. One cannot even construct such a doctrine from the descriptions of Pentecost
 - ii. Rather, we must trust the *interpretations* of these events from the apostles, like when Peter preached His Pentecost sermon
 - b. These interpretations are more explanatory than the descriptive, and thus will inform our understanding of the Holy Spirit
- b. This is a departure from the normal way in which the Spirit is granted by God when faith is placed upon Jesus.
 - i. First, the grace of God, through one and the same Holy Spirit to all who believe in Jesus, unites us into one new humanity
 - 1. **Ephesians 2:14-21**;
 - ii. God’s gift of His Spirit is not usually connected with either baptism or laying on of hands, but with faith in Jesus
 - 1. Note that the apostles do not re-baptize the Samaritans
 - a. The Samaritans had “received the Word” and that was sufficient
 - b. Note, however, that “the Word” had a particular content of a particular Jesus

- i. There are those who have “received a Word”, but it is not the gospel, or have “believed in Jesus”, but it is not the Jesus revealed in the apostolic Word
 - ii. These are not receivers of the Spirit, nor are part of the one Church
 - 1. e.g. Mormons – different Jesus
 - 2. e.g. Roman Catholic – different Word
 - 2. **Acts 10:46** shows that the “God-fearing Gentiles” received the Holy Spirit while Peter was speaking, without laying on of hands or baptism
 - a. In fact, in this case baptism follows the Spirit’s falling
 - 3. We receive the Spirit by hearing the gospel and believing it
 - a. **Galatians 3:2-3, 14; cf. Romans 10:17**
 - b. **Ephesians 1:13**
 - c. **John 7:38-39**
 - d. **John 20:21-23** – the HS is evidenced not by signs and wonders, but by discernment, wisdom, and authority
- iii. There are four times mentioned in Acts when the Spirit falls upon a group of people and they speak in tongues or prophesy in a demonstrative way
 - 1. **2:4** – the Jerusalem Pentecost filling of the Spirit
 - 2. **8:15-16** – the Samaritan Pentecost falling upon of the Spirit (assumed visible signs)
 - 3. **10:44-45** – the God-fearing Gentiles’ conversion in the house of Cornelius
 - a. Note how the Jewish (circumcised) believers interpreted it in v45 – “they were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles.”
 - i. Their surprise showed that it was not the norm
 - b. Peter again notes this “inclusion proof of the Holy Spirit” when he reports back to the apostles, as recorded in **Acts 11:15-19**, because the “circumcisers” were criticizing him for eating with the Gentiles
 - 4. **Acts 19:1-7** – the Ephesians who had known only John’s baptism of repentance, but not of Jesus, were instructed by Paul, believed on and baptized in the name of Jesus, and received the Spirit
 - a. This example includes the particularly odd inclusion that there were 12 men in all – Luke indicating that the Church is not merely Gentiles included into Judaism, but fully included and whose leaders would arise from Gentiles, too
 - b. Though they had been affected by John the Baptist’s ministry, here we see that they are fully included in the life and ministry of the Church as complete and full participants
 - c. As such, they were verified by God through “Pentecost catching them up fully” (Peterson)
- iv. So, we see speaking in tongues and prophesy, the demonstrative demonstration of cross-cultural power of the Spirit of God and exclusively evident of His intent to “bring in the nations” (thus foreign languages and prophesy) was only upon *groups* for the express purpose of verifying said groups into full inclusion into the family of God through Christ Jesus
 - 1. This is why Paul argues such reasoning twice in his letter to the Ephesians
 - a. “...In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the Spirit *of promise* who is the down payment of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.” (1:13-14)
 - b. “For through him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father.” (2:18)
 - 2. It also explains why we don’t see this “falling upon” of the Spirit in other places where people are converted through faith in Jesus
 - a. Philippian jailer (**Acts 16**)

- b. Joppa believers (**Acts 9:42**)
 - c. God-fearing Gentiles in the Antioch synagogue (**Acts 13**)
 - d. Iconium believers, both Jew and Gentile (**Acts 14:1**)
 - e. Berean believers, both Jew and Gentile (**Acts 17**)
 - f. Athenian believers, Dionysius and Damaris (**Acts 17**)
 - g. Corinthian believers, Crispus and others (**Acts 18**)
 - v. This work of identification and fullness of participation is a pattern
 - “The official visit and action of Peter and John were historically exceptional. These things have no precise parallels in our day, because there are no longer any Samaritans or any apostles of Christ. Today, because we are not Samaritans, we receive forgiveness and the Spirit together, the moment we believe.” (John Stott, *The Message of Acts*)
 - c. The evidence of the Holy Spirit was evidence that the faith of previous enemies was empowered and granted by God
 - i. Peter and John were the vindicating agents of the full inclusion of the Samaritans because the Spirit of God had been poured out
 - ii. We will see this even more provocatively when the Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles, who have no Jewish historical bond (which the Samaritans had, but not ‘purely’)
 - 1. House of Cornelius in Acts 10
 - 2. There, even more so, the full inclusion of “those far off” (Acts 2:42), is vindicated and expressed
 - iii. In all cases, the Holy Spirit’s sealing and inclusive work is seen not as a magical result, but as a gift of God
 - 1. “God has granted *to the Gentiles repentance which leads to life.*” (Acts 11:18)
 - 2. It is repentance which leads to life which is the real gift, the ultimate work of God, not the pouring out of the Spirit
 - a. The Spirit is the cause and sign, the transformation of the heart is the substance of biblical faith, i.e. repentance leading to life via faith in JC
3. All of This Goes to Show that Jesus Christ is the Living Lord of a Multi-Ethnic Church Vastly Bigger Than Presumed
- a. ANY who repent and believe in Jesus Christ as authoritative Lord and merciful Savior are fully included in the life of God and receive His Spirit
 - b. This includes those from histories of betrayal, sexual perversion, syncretic worship, magic and sorcery, cultural and personal depravity, etc.
 - i. God chooses and transforms people of every kind through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus and forms them all into the image of Christ Jesus
 - c. This means that there is nobody beyond hope, nobody too far gone, no person or class of people who cannot, in the blink of an eye, be born from above at the delivery of the message of Jesus Christ crucified and risen and reigning.
 - d. We must work for such unity between races and ethnicities within the church of Jesus Christ, former enemies, those from various sin-loving lifestyles, striving to present every person complete in Christ!