

HEARING THE SPIRIT

Jesus told the Christians in Ephesus, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Rev. 2:7). John the Apostle penned Jesus' letter to the church in his Book of Revelation, but it was God's Holy Spirit who gave the message. So it is without Bible today. When you read its message, you are reading what the Spirit says to you.

When Christ ascended back to heaven, he sent the Spirit to complete the work he had begun. Jesus predicted this: "I will ask the Father, (he said) and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17 ESV) Jesus also predicted, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:26 ESV) Furthermore, Jesus said "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. (John 15:26 ESV) Jesus also predicted that "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you [you apostles] into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13-14 ESV)

Jesus also predicted all of these predictions would begin to be true for the apostles. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Act 1:8 ESV) To his apostles, Jesus promised, "...you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:5 ESV)

As the Master had promised, the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost that shortly followed. The Spirit's coming was spectacular. He came with a sound like a rushing mighty wind (like a whirlwind) and upon each Apostle there appeared something like tongues of fire that sat on their heads. These twelve humble men, with limited education, nevertheless began to preach the good news of Christ in languages they had never studied (Acts 2:1-8)

The Spirit's coming was not secretive, hidden away in some remote location. It was in the Jewish temple on a national holiday when thousands of Jews had gathered for worship. When the Spirit came, he conveyed supernatural gifts to the Apostles enabling them to declare the great news of the crucified Christ and how the Son of God was raised from the dead on the third day. The Holy Spirit brought to the apostles' remembrance all that Jesus had taught. The Spirit also revealed to the apostles the conditions whereby sinners could be forgiven and saved. The Holy Spirit instilled within those humble men the courage to undertake the Lord's

commission of preaching to every creature under heaven. They were lambs in the midst of a pack of wolves, but the Spirit empowered them with courage and knowledge.

Through the twelve apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was spread to the early Christians in numerous supernatural gifts. As the apostle Paul later wrote, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1Cor 12:7 ESV). Those gifts were the several ways in which the Holy Spirit's power was revealed through those first century Christians.

Those gifts were remarkable endowments that enabled the Apostles and the early Christians to succeed in their great, world-wide mission of preaching the gospel to every creature. Among those gifts were "the word of wisdom; the word of knowledge; supernatural faith; gifts of healing, working of miracles and prophecy, spiritual discernment was also available and the ability to teach in foreign languages and the interpretation of foreign languages. (1 Cor 12:6-11.)

That era of supernatural gifts was a limited time...in fact, that era lasted only through the lifetime of the apostles. That period lasted until the New Testament of Jesus Christ could be written down. Just as the supernatural events of the Old Testament lasted until all 39 books of the Old Testament could be written, so also the supernatural events of the New Testament lasted until the New Testament could be completely written. The Holy Spirit's great gifts were needed to launch the church on her great global mission. The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles to give the world an authoritative record of Christ's life and His will for His people.

Jesus' apostle Paul explained to the Corinthian church that there was coming a time when the gift of prophecy would be done away. The gift of speaking in tongues would also cease. And the supernatural gift of knowledge that the Spirit gave to some members would no longer be available. The apostle Paul also predicted **when** those gifts would cease. They would cease when "that which was perfect was come." (1 Cor 13:10).

The perfect (or complete) New Testament was not completed until about 100 A.D. The last apostle to die was the apostle John. He saw the visions written in the book of Revelation around the year 95 or 96. All the other books of the New Testament had been written prior to that decade. Therefore, the miraculous gifts were no longer needed when the revelation was completed. When that empowered generation died, who were endowed with these miraculous gifts, the Holy Spirit stopped manifesting Himself through those means. However, the Holy Spirit has not left the world...He still lives in the believers of every generation. That's right!

The Holy Spirit has been very clear that He lives in the hearts of those who have obediently followed Christ. When believers repent and are baptized into Jesus Christ, they receive two important promises. One promise is the forgiveness of sins. The second promise is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is what Acts 2:38 says. In fact, it was on the day of Pentecost after Peter had preached that many of the people responded to his message by asking "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." So, the Holy Spirit comes to live with every person who is born of the Spirit and of the water. In fact, the Christian's body is said to be a Temple for the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 6:19, et.al)

From the Spirit's word we also learn that he strengthens Christians (Eph 3:16). With His strength He comforts us. (John 15:26) By His word, the Spirit also leads us. (Romans 8:14) By means of the Spirit a Christian can "kill" or mortify the sinful deeds of the body. (Romans 8:13). The Holy Spirit of God bears witness to Christ by the written gospel which He has inspired. When an obedient believer looks into this inspired book he or she can easily testify whether he has been obedient to the Spirit's teaching. This is the meaning of Romans 8:16-17 where Paul wrote, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." ([Rom 8:16-17 ESV](#))

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit helps the Christian's infirmity. Well! In what way is a Christian infirm? The word "infirmity" implies weakness, frailty. How is a Christian weak? Paul answers that, being still in the flesh, we Christians do not know how to pray as we ought. Many times the Christian does not know what to pray for. We do not know what is best in a given situation. Therefore, we must rely upon God's Holy Spirit to take our heartfelt desires before the throne of God. The Holy Spirit does this for every Christian. The apostle Paul also assures the Christians that the Holy Spirit is the seal of our salvation. He is the down-payment of the Christian's eternal life in heaven. (Eph 1:13-14). Right now, we humans do not live forever. But the Holy Spirit's testimony is that He is our guarantor of our inheritance of eternal life. He is the executor of the last will and testament of Jesus Christ.

Many people today claim they have miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. But they do not. What they offer as their gifts are not what the Holy Spirit gave the apostles and the Christians of the first century. Some claim that the Holy Spirit speaks through them, but then what they teach contradicts the Spirit's Word. So who are you listening to? Are you listening to a man or woman who says they have the Spirit speaking through them? Or are you listening to the Spirit's Word given in and protected in the greatest of all books, the Bible?

When Jesus and the Spirit came to John on the island of Patmos around the year 95 A.D., Jesus gave John a commission. John said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, **"Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches..."** (Rev 1:10-11 ESV) And so John wrote down what he saw and heard. He wrote those seven letters to the seven churches in the province of Asia. At the end of each one of those letters, the apostle John recorded, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The Holy Spirit is still speaking to the churches and to the world of lost sinners. Are you listening? Do you have an ear? If so, then we challenge you like the apostle of old, hear what the Spirit says.