

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About... Miracles - Part 2

Jesus promised that ALL truth would be given to the twelve disciples. At the Last Supper with the twelve Jesus taught them concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit which would fall upon them as promised by John the Baptist. John said, "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I...He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 3:11). Jesus told the twelve, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper...that is the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you [speaking to the twelve] know Him because He abides with you" (John 14:16-17).

After Jesus' death on the cross and before He ascended into heaven, He told the twelve, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The fulfillment of this promise is recorded in the second chapter of Acts. The baptism in the Holy Spirit gave the apostles power to perform various miracles: speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4), healing the sick (Acts 3:6-8), raising the dead (Acts 9:36-41), preaching by direct inspiration (John 14:26; Acts 5:12).

With very few exceptions, modern day "miracle workers" maintain that they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. If they are right in this, then they would have the same power received by the apostles. But why is it that these so-called "miracle workers," when going to a foreign country must study the local language [tongues] in order to communicate with the citizens? Surely, if they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, they should have the same power as the apostles with the ability to cast out demons, speak with new tongues, pick up serpents, and drink any deadly poison which would not hurt them, and laying hands on the sick so that they would recover immediately (Mark 16:17-18). Also why would these modern day wonder workers have to read and study the Bible in order to know anything that it teaches. Obviously, if they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit they should be able to express "all truth" as did the apostles, without the necessity of any Bible study.

The failure of the modern day "miracle workers" to duplicate the miracles of the apostles is indisputable proof that they have not received the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which could only be administered by Jesus (Matt. 3:11). In fact, no man living in the world today has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Paul, writing to the Ephesian saints in approximately 64 A.D., several years after the baptism in the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles and to Cornelius' household (Acts 10:44-45; 11:15-17), said, "There is one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). The one baptism taught by Paul was water baptism administered to believing obedient disciples (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16).

The prophet Joel spoke of these signs and wonders and various miracles: "I will pour forth My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters will prophesy...Even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit" (Acts 2:17-18). Only the apostles could pass these miraculous gifts of the Spirit to mankind. When the twelve summoned the Jerusalem congregation, they asked the brethren to select seven men [deacons] to be put in charge of serving tables. They brought these men before the apostles; and after praying, they [apostles] laid their hands on them (Acts 6:2-6).

One of the seven, Stephen was then able to perform "great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8). However, this power could not be passed on by Stephen to other men. The apostles always had to be present for the miraculous gifts to be passed on to others. "But when they believed Philip [one of the seven appointed deacons] preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized men and women alike. Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed" (Acts 8:12-13).

Notice in the following verses that Philip could not pass these miraculous gifts on to other men. "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John [apostles], who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit for He had not fallen on any of them; they had simply been baptized [water] in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they [Peter and John] began laying their hands on them and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles hands (Acts 8:14-18). Next week we will discuss when the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased.

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to: info@sanjuanchurchofchrist.org