

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Of the Holy Spirit



Misunderstandings

- 1 The Holy Spirit imparts a state of maniac elation
- 2 The Holy Spirit possesses it's recipients
3. A person cannot know if they have received the Holy Spirit



Misunderstandings

Of the Holy Spirit / By Peter Kamen

After the resurrection of Jesus, He appeared several times to His disciples instructing and preparing them for their future mission which included the overseeing of the coming New Testament church. It is recorded in the book of Acts chapter one verse four that Jesus commanded the disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the "Promise of the Father" which would be the "Baptism by the Holy Spirit". This is now history, the Holy Spirit was sent on the Day of Pentecost, and the New Testament church began along with the preaching of the Gospel to the world.

Each generation of the New Testament church has been the "beneficiary" of this promise. Those whom have responded to the call echoed by Peter "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins", have also met the conditions to receive the promise, the "gift of the Holy Spirit." [Acts chapter 2: 38-39]

My purpose here is not to argue as to what the Holy Spirit in fact is. Experience has taught me that this can lead to the "strivings" of which we have been cautioned to avoid. But over the years I have heard many concepts, teachings, and statements as to how the presence of God's Holy Spirit manifests itself in the life of a Christian who has inherited this gift. It is in this context that I will address what I believe are three major misconceptions concerning the Holy Spirit and how it works with the Christian.

MATTHEW 3:16
 AND JESUS,
 WHEN HE
 WAS
 BAPTIZED,
 WENT UP
 STRAIGHT-
 WAY OUT
 OF THE
 WATER: AND,
 LO, THE
 HEAVENS
 WERE
 OPENED
 UNTO HIM,
 AND HE SAW
 THE SPIRIT OF
 GOD
 DESCENDING
 LIKE A DOVE,
 AND LIGHTING
 UPON
 HIM"



Misunderstanding #1

"The Holy Spirit indicates it's presence by imparting a state of manic elation."

While it is certainly listed among the "fruits" of the Holy Spirit, there are times when the Spirit can induce a state of deep and serious reflection in a person. The Psalmist wrote "Search me O God and know my heart, Try me and know my anxieties, And see if there is any wicked way in me" [Psalm 139:23-24]. I have found myself in such a state. I am in my middle sixties [still "young" by some standards] and for all practical purposes, I don't "have my whole life ahead of me". I am closer to the time when I will stand before my God, and I believe that His Spirit has been moving me to realize more than ever that this life is truly temporary. The Holy Spirit serves as a means of guidance and council from God, and there are times when it will move us to repentance as well. Psalm 51 is a good example of this where David bitterly repented and feared that God would withdraw His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also serves as a "beacon" to guide us and keep the Christian in a state of "justification" before God. [Romans 8:1] Our emotions alone are not necessarily a confirmation of having received the Holy Spirit, but they do serve as a vehicle for which the Spirit can convey God's mind to us. We do have the responsibility to "try the spirits" as it were, and compare such thoughts and emotions to what the word of God confirms are in fact, "Fruits of the Spirit." More to be addressed concerning this in the next points.



Misunderstanding #2

"The Holy Spirit "Possesses" it's recipients."

Some Christians believe that the Holy Spirit literally "possesses" those whom receive it, completely taking over and controlling such a person. Many believe that "speaking in an unknown tongue," or becoming super charged with emotion, suddenly "testifying" are how the Holy Spirit confirms it's presence in an individual or congregation. For the most part, many base this on a misunderstanding of what happened on the Day of Pentecost when Jesus did indeed fulfill His promise to send the Holy Spirit. This is recorded in Acts the second chapter. It shows how when they were all assembled together, the Spirit came with the outward show of rushing wind and tongues of fire, enabling those gathered to communicate across language barriers. There is no record of anyone losing control, or uttering gibberish. While those who did not understand what God was doing, accused the disciples of being "drunk with new wine," but the sign which God wanted to convey was accomplished. Salvation was now of-

ferred to all who would repent and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

A point to consider here is something which Paul told the Corinthians in First Corinthians, chapter 14.

Here Paul was addressing the issue of prophesying and "speaking in tongues" Paul very carefully explains that unless it is of profit and edification to the congregation, it is of no practical use. Apparently some had the misconception that they could not prevent themselves from prophesying when "filled with the Holy Spirit," so Paul plainly states in verses 32 and 33 that "The spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets, and that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. The word "subject" translates out to exactly just that, "to be in subjection to". Anyone who is the recipient of the Holy Spirit is led, not "possessed" by it, and is in full control of their faculties. We should be very careful to never allow a "spirit" to take control of our ability to be aware of our actions or thought processes.

Misunderstanding # 3

"A Person cannot really know if they in fact have received the Holy Spirit."

Believe it or not, I have actually heard this statement made from those who would teach others in the church. Actually the New Testament in particular is filled with references to how the Holy Spirit is manifested in the life of a Christian.

In Galatians the fifth chapter we have the well known passage which lists the "Fruit" of the Spirit. Verse 22-23 tells us "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: Against such there is no law." [In other words, all of these things conform to God's law]

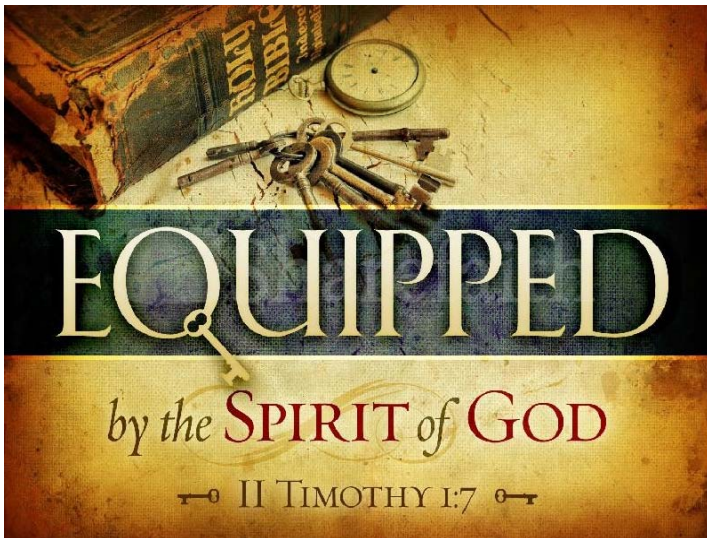
Conversely, we are also given some guidelines as to how to recognize a wrong spirit and it's source. In the book of James, chapter three, we have a very pointed set of scriptures contained in verses 13 through 18 contrasting God's Spirit from that of Satan:

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show in good conduct that his works are done

"FOR AS
MANY AS
ARE LED
BY THE
SPIRIT OF
GOD,
THEY
ARE THE
SONS OF
GOD."

ROM 8:14





in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. *This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.* But the wisdom that is from above is first pure [no hidden agendas] then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, [not have it's own way] full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

The presence of God's Spirit is confirmed by a Christian growing in these fruits. The Apostle Peter explained that we become "Partakers of the divine nature." enabling us to escape the corruption of lust in this world. [2 Peter 1:4]

The Holy Spirit also serves as a "down payment" ["earnest" as the old King James translation has it] of our final inheritance of eternal life. [2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:14] I know that I have occasionally startled some people when I have made the statement that a Christian has "eternal life" in them at this point in time. I did *not* say that we are now "immortal", but these scriptures plainly show that when a Christian receives the Holy Spirit, they are then "sealed" with a down payment of their final redemption. [1 John 5:11-13]

To the converted Christian, the Holy Spirit is a very tangible presence. Paul records in Romans 8:14-16 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father. *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*"

As we celebrate this Day of Pentecost which reminds us of the coming and presence of God's Holy Spirit, we can also look forward [as this day also pictures] to the time when God will "Pour out His Spirit on all flesh."



Peter Kamen is a long time member in the Church of God and lives in the State of New York.



1767 Stumpf Blvd. Gretna, La. 70056
504-367-2005
www.thecogmi.org