

**The Christian Restoration Association 2018 Bible Conference:  
ACTS IN ACTION**

**THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER**

**ACTS 1:4-5**

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**INTRODUCTION**

- A. How does the Book of Acts fit into the broad scope of salvation history?
1. The Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, is truly one of the most momentous turning points in all of world history. This is certainly true from the standpoint of the way we live our lives every day.
  2. Here are five pivotal NEW THINGS that began on that day:
    - a. God inaugurated a new kind of special people: THE CHURCH.
    - b. God began a new way of relating to His people: the NEW COVENANT.
    - c. God began to require a new, expanded version of saving faith: in THE TRINITY.
    - d. God established a new condition for receiving salvation: CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.
    - e. God began to include a new aspect in the gift of salvation: the INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT.
- B. Many false doctrines and theological problems are the result of a failure to understand these monumental changes.
1. My focus here is on the last of the above five points: the new gift of the Holy Spirit.
  2. This is the point of my Scripture text, Acts 1:4-5 (NASB): “<sup>4</sup>Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” *He said*, “you heard of from Me; <sup>5</sup>for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”
- C. I plan to address two main theological issues that can be resolved by coming to a proper understanding of this text, as it focuses on “the promise of the Father,” namely, the imminent *baptism in the Holy Spirit*. What are these two issues?
1. The first issue is what I will call the Zwinglian problem (also known as the faith-only problem). The issue is whether baptism in water is a salvation event. Most of the Protestant

world denies it; and ironically they like to use the Book of Acts as proof of this denial—especially by referring to what is said about the Holy Spirit in Acts 8 and Acts 10-11.

2. The second issue is the common Restoration Movement tendency to limit what is called the “baptism in the Holy Spirit” to two main events in the Book of Acts, i.e., the miraculous gifts of tongue-speaking in Acts 2:1-13 (Pentecost) and Acts 10:44-48 (Cornelius).

D. The key to resolving these two issues, and correcting the errors related thereto, is a right understanding of “the promise of the Father” in Acts 1:4-5.

## I. FOUR KINDS OF GIFTS GIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

I am convinced that salvation begins in the moment of Christian baptism, and I am convinced that this moment is the time when the seeking sinner receives the saving gift of the Holy Spirit. This saving presence of the Spirit is a mark of salvation (Ephesians 1:13).

However, most modern Protestantism follows Huldreich Zwingli’s repudiation of any connection between baptism and salvation. They believe that salvation, including the gift of the indwelling Spirit, is given at the moment one begins to believe in Jesus. One of their most common arguments is that the Book of Acts shows that there is *no appointed connection* between baptism and the receiving of the Spirit; see especially the Samaritan converts in Acts 8:12-17 and Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:44-48.

Our response to this fallacious argument is to point out that there are four different ways in which the Holy Spirit is given and received, or (to say it another way) four kinds of gifts given by the Holy Spirit—only one of which is connected with salvation. Once we understand this, we will see that the Zwinglian argument from the Book of Acts is completely false.

Our purpose here is to describe these four kinds of relationships with the Holy Spirit.

A. As long as God has had a “special people,” the Holy Spirit has worked among, within, and through them. This applies to both Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church.

1. One cannot distinguish these four kinds of Spirit-presence by the language used to describe them. Many different verbal formulas are used interchangeably in Scripture to describe these different kinds of working of the Spirit. For example:
  - The Spirit is given, and the Spirit is received.
  - The Spirit is a gift, and the Spirit gives gifts.
  - The Spirit is poured out on someone, and the Spirit comes upon someone.
  - The Spirit falls upon someone, and one is filled with the Spirit.
  - The Spirit dwells within someone, and the Spirit rests upon someone.
  - One is baptized in the Spirit, and one drinks of the Spirit.
  - One is led by the Spirit, and one is strengthened by the Spirit.

Nothing is implied by these various pairings. The point is that there are many ways in which the Spirit is described as “being given to” or as “giving something to” an individual, and the language by itself cannot be the determining factor as to which kind of gift is intended.

2. Here I will speak of the different ways the Holy Spirit connects with individuals in order to GIVE him or her something. I will show that there are *four different kinds* of “somethings,” described here as “gifts.”

B. We can distinguish four specific kinds of gifts bestowed by the Spirit upon individuals, or four ways the Spirit works in and through individuals.

1. TRUTH gifts. These are powers and abilities that involve revelation and inspiration, whereby chosen individuals are enabled to speak or write God-breathed messages from God to mankind. E.g., 2 Samuel 23:2; 2 Peter 1:21.
2. SIGN gifts. These are the ability to perform *miracles* of all sorts, for the specific purpose of giving evidence or proof of the divine origin of accompanying revelation or inspired messages (i.e., truth gifts). E.g., Numbers 11:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:9-11.
3. SERVICE gifts. These are ordinary (i.e., non-miraculous) tasks and abilities bestowed on individuals to enable them to *serve* the people of God in specific ways, i.e., to meet the various needs for the well-being of the people of God.
  - a. In some ways these service gifts overlap the previous two categories (which are very specific KINDS of service gifts), except that these do not involve miraculous or supernatural powers for the purpose of receiving and verifying inspired messages from God. E.g., Exodus 31:1-11; 1 Samuel 16:13; Romans 12:7-8.
  - b. References to such service gifts from the Holy Spirit are mostly absent from the narrative of the Book of Acts, so they will not figure into our discussion below. (One place such a gift might appear is Acts 6:3.)
4. SALVATION gifts. The Holy Spirit becomes present in the body, spirit, and life of sinners who have obeyed the gospel, in order to bestow upon them the saving gifts of regeneration and sanctification. E.g., Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 3:16; Titus 3:5.

C. In the Book of Acts it is critically important to distinguish among (especially) the *truth* gifts, the *sign* gifts, and the *salvation* gifts. These are not necessarily given as a package, and are not necessarily given in a particular order. Here are important examples:

1. Acts 2.
  - a. The sign gift comes first: the speaking in tongues, vv. 4-13. (It is given to verify)
  - b. The truth gift follows: Peter’s sermon, vv. 14ff. (It is given to explain)
  - c. The salvation gift, which is the climactic point: given in baptism, vv. 38-39.

2. Acts 10.
  - a. The truth gift comes first: Peter’s sermon, vv. 34ff.
  - b. The sign gift follows: the speaking in tongues, vv. 44ff.
  - c. The salvation gift, which is the climactic point: given in baptism, vv. 47-48.
3. Acts 8:4-13.
  - a. The truth gift: Philip’s preaching, vv. 4-5.
  - b. The sign gifts: Philip’s miracles, vv. 6-8.
  - c. The salvation gift: given in baptism, vv. 12-13. (See Acts 5;32.)
4. Acts 8:14-24 – the giving of truth and sign gifts ONLY.

D. The Zwinglian error is to assume that every reference to the coming (or giving) of the Holy Spirit upon someone must be a salvation event. This is simply NOT TRUE. It is an example of extremely faulty interpretation of the Bible, in the interests of supporting a false doctrine.

## II. THE NEW WAY THE SPIRIT BEGINS TO WORK ON PENTECOST

One clear theme of predictive prophecy is that for many centuries God was planning to *do something new* among His people through a special working of the Holy Spirit. This theme appears in several Old Testament prophets and in the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus as recorded in the New Testament. It becomes clear that this “new thing” will happen on the Day of Pentecost.

Many Christians, especially Pentecostals but also including many in the Restoration Movement, have identified the fulfillment of this prophecy to be a kind of SIGN GIFT, i.e., the Pentecostal gift of speaking in tongues (and possibly later). Included here is the promise of baptism in the Holy Spirit; this is seen as being fulfilled in the gift of tongues especially.

I believe this is a seriously faulty interpretation of the prophecies and promises of a new working of the Holy Spirit, and a seriously wrong analysis of the data given in the Book of Acts. Here I will show that “the promise of the Father” of a new working of the Spirit—described by John the Baptist and Jesus as “baptism in the Holy Spirit”—is the SALVATION gift of the indwelling of the Spirit.

A. Pentecost was the fulfillment of a whole string of prophecies and promises that say the Holy Spirit is going to do something NEW. Where do we find this “promise of the Father”?

1. Isaiah 43:19-21; 44:3-4. <sup>19</sup> “Behold, **I will do something new**, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert. <sup>20</sup> The beasts of the field will glorify Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people. <sup>21</sup> “The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise. . . . <sup>3</sup> For I will pour out water on the thirsty *land* and streams on the dry

ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants; <sup>4</sup> And they will spring up among the grass like poplars by streams of water.”

2. Ezekiel 36:25-27. <sup>25</sup> “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

3. Joel 2:28-32a. <sup>28</sup> “It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. <sup>29</sup> Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. <sup>30</sup> I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. <sup>31</sup> The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>32</sup> And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered.”

4. Matthew 3:11. “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (See Luke 3:16 also.)

5. John 1:32-34. <sup>32</sup> John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. <sup>33</sup> I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

6. John 4:7-14. <sup>7</sup> There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” <sup>8</sup> For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. <sup>9</sup> Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” <sup>11</sup> She said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? <sup>12</sup> You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?” <sup>13</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

7. John 7:37-39. <sup>37</sup> Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

8. Luke 24:45-49. <sup>45</sup> Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

9. Acts 1:4-8. <sup>4</sup> Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” *He said*, “you heard of from Me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” <sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup> He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; <sup>8</sup> but 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.”

10. Acts 2:33. <sup>33</sup> Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

(It is important to understand that all of these prophecies and promises are pointing ahead to the same event—the giving of “the promise of the Father.”)

B. Based on these Scriptures, what are the various aspects of this “promise of the Father”?

1. It is a promise made by God the Father. See the John 1, Luke 24, and Acts 2 selections above.
2. It has to do with a working of the Holy Spirit. See all, above.
3. This work is something remedial—something that corrects a bad situation such as dry ground or thirst. See the Isaiah 43, John 4, and John 7 selections above.
4. This is given in abundance; it is like water “poured out” to produce rivers deep enough to be immersed in. See the Isaiah 43, John 1, and Matthew 3 selections.
5. It will not be just a one-time thing, but will continue into future generations. See Isaiah 43 and Joel 2.
6. It will be for all mankind—Gentiles as well as Jews. See Joel 2 and Luke 24.
7. The Spirit will be sent by the Messiah after his resurrection and ascension. See Matthew 3, John 1, John 4, John 7, and Acts 2.
8. This giving of the Spirit will be accompanied by mighty signs and wonders. See Joel 2.
9. This giving of the Spirit is for salvation. See Ezekiel 36, Joel 2, and John 4.
10. This will be given to believers only. See John 7.
11. This will be SOMETHING NEW. See Isaiah 43.

C. Considering the four ways the Spirit connects with individuals (section I. above), which one of these fits the above criteria? Obviously, only one: the SALVATION GIFT.

1. We should know this from the beginning, because this is the only one that is a NEW way of the Spirit's working.
  - a. All of the other three are already present prior to Pentecost, in Old Testament times—especially including the SIGN gifts (including supernatural speaking [prophesying] as a *sign* of another distinct working of the Spirit—Numbers 11).
  - b. The saving indwelling presence of the Spirit was not given prior to Pentecost; it was a NEW THING on the Day of Pentecost.
  - c. This in itself refutes the interpretation of “baptism in the Holy Spirit” as being fulfilled in the gift of tongues on Pentecost, and in any other such sign gifts.
  
2. Another consideration that rules out truth and sign gifts as “the promise of the Father” is the fact that this promised gift would be for all who believe and call upon Jesus as Lord, even into future generations.
  - a. How can we think that something so lavishly promised could be fulfilled in just a few people in just a small number of events (especially just two)? Limiting the baptism in the Spirit to Pentecost and Cornelius just does not live up to the expectations generated by the above string of prophecies! It would be quite disappointing—much ado about nothing.
  - b. The very foundation of all Pentecostal-type denominations and churches is erroneous from the beginning, i.e., thinking that a sign gift could be the main point of Pentecost.
  - c. The only gift given by the Spirit on Pentecost that can qualify as “the promise of the Father” is the salvation gift.

D. Here is a summary of what was happening on Pentecost as described in Acts 2.

1. First is the *outpouring* of the Spirit, in a single event described in vv. 1-3. At this one point of time, Jesus the risen Lord was pouring out the Spirit into a specific physical location in this visible universe (see v. 33). This is when the Spirit was GIVEN; the Spirit then became the Father's gift, present and available in that place. (“The gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38 may be referring to that already-occurred act of *giving* the Spirit, who is now ready to enter into anyone who will receive Him by obeying the gospel: “Repent and be baptized, and you will receive the literal presence within yourself of the Holy Spirit who was just given as the Father's gift for us all!”)
  
2. The next event, beginning in v. 4 (through v. 13), is the giving of the temporary but extremely conspicuous sign gift: the ability to speak in unlearned foreign languages. This was probably given just to the apostles. This was not a truth gift, in the sense that it was not given for the purpose of communicating some new message from God. The only function of the tongues was to be a miraculous sign to confirm the divine origin of the sermon Peter was about to preach. Once that purpose was accomplished (see vv. 7, 12), there was no further need for this sign gift.
  
3. The next great thing on Pentecost was the truth gift displayed by the Apostle Peter: the preaching of his sermon, vv. 14ff. This is not specifically said, but it is obvious that he was filled with the Spirit's gift of revelation and inspiration. (This fulfilled Jesus's promise specifically to

the apostles in John 14:26; 15:26; and 16:12-15.) Why was Peter's sermon so readily accepted by the audience? Because of the *sign gift* that set it up! (Remember—neither such a thing as a sign gift nor a truth gift was something *new*. These were NOT the fulfillment of the promise of the Father.)

4. Finally comes the main point of Pentecost: the salvation gift itself, vv. 37-39.

- a. “You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” How was the audience supposed to know what this meant? How were they to understand it? *In the light of v. 33!* The “gift of the Spirit” is what Jesus had already poured out, as recorded in vv. 1-3. That’s when the *gift* was given for the church. (“Gift” of the Spirit is not a technical or exclusive term used just for the implanting of the Spirit in the believer in the moment of baptism. See Acts 10:45, e.g.)
- b. By introducing the requirement for water baptism as the time for receiving Spirit baptism, the Apostle Peter is describing the fulfillment of the promise specifically of our baptism in the Spirit. Since there is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), the water and the Spirit are joined together here for the first time (a la John 3:5). John the Baptist’s disciples were baptized with water only, but Christians are those who have been baptized with BOTH water AND Spirit. See 1 Corinthians 12:13.
- c. Peter is saying to the audience, “Repent, and EVERY ONE of you be baptized, and YOU TOO shall receive the outpoured gift of the Holy Spirit, the very Spirit who was working in that event of tongue-speaking that just amazed you! The now-present Spirit was not just for the Apostles; He is here for YOU also!” See how Titus 3:5-6 uses the same word for “poured out” (*ekcheō*) to describe our individual receiving of the Spirit in baptism, that was used for the initial outpouring in Acts 2:1-3 (see Acts 2:17, 18, 33).
- d. This is seen especially in v. 39, where Peter puts “you” in the first, emphatic position in the sentence: “Because, FOR YOU is the promise!” It’s FOR YOU, not just for the Apostles! And what promise is Peter talking about? The one he has already highlighted in v. 33: “the promise of the Holy Spirit”—whose presence you have already observed in this very place! This promise of the Father is for you! (See again Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4.)
- e. But notice how Peter makes it clear that this promise of the Spirit is not JUST for those present in that audience, who might have had the privilege of observing the first moments of the fulfilling of this great promise. No, this same promise is for your descendants—future generations! And this promise is for all who are “far off” (Greek, *makran*)—a word used to describe the Gentiles in Ephesians 2:13, 17 (see Acts 22:21).
- f. What we have just described here is the fulfillment of all the prophecies and promises from Isaiah 43 and following, including the promise that Jesus would baptize us in the Holy Spirit. This includes the thousands who were baptized on Pentecost: when they were baptized in water, Jesus was baptizing them in the Holy Spirit!

g. Does this mean that the thousands who were baptized in water and Spirit on Pentecost immediately began to speak in tongues and do other miraculous things? Absolutely not. This is one of the biggest misunderstandings of baptism in the Spirit, i.e., that it is supposed to convey miracle-working ability of some kind. No, it is a SALVATION gift of the Spirit, not a SIGN gift! In fact, the Book of Acts specifies that after the thousands were baptized on Pentecost, “everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place **through the apostles**” (2:43). The absence of any reference to miracles being done by the early Christians continues through Acts 5:12, where it is said that “at the hands **of the apostles** many signs and wonders were taking place among the people.” (The first non-Apostles to work miracles were those upon whom Apostles laid their hands, in part for this very purpose. See Acts 6:6-8; 8:6-8, 18; 19:6. Please understand: Sign gifts from the Holy Spirit *were not the promise of the Father* that was fulfilled for the first time on the Day of Pentecost!)