

people in general, or to people of this generation.

All would agree that the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit, as recorded in Acts 2, on the day the church was begun. Following that outpouring, all believers who were baptized in water received the *indwelling of the Spirit* (Acts 5:32), but this did not involve miraculous power. Acts 5:12 tells us, “*And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people.*” Though, at that time many thousands had been baptized, **only the apostles** were performing miracles. Much later, when the first Gentiles were taught, (Acts 10) they also experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which Peter described as, “*...the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning*” (Acts 11:15-18). Such an outpouring is not recorded to have happened on any other occasion in New Testament times, it has not been promised to us, nor does it happen today.

Did people, other than the apostles, perform miracles? Yes. How did they receive such power? Through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, conferring special gifts (“*... when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given...*” (Acts 8:18).

But only the apostles had the power to give these gifts, as evidenced by the fact that in Acts 8,

when the Samaritans were converted, Peter and John went down to lay hands on them and to bestow the special gifts, even though Philip had taught and baptized them — and he had performed miracles. *But he could not give that miraculous power to others.*

The apostles have all died, centuries ago. Concerning those special gifts, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 13:8-13 that there was a better way (we *can* be deceived by magicians, teachers in pagan religions claiming to do miracles, and by false preachers): Paul said that the gifts were only “in part” (not every Christian was given a gift), but the better way would be the coming of “that which is perfect” — the completion of the New Testament, the only perfect *thing* existing in this world. With God’s word we can “try the spirits” (teachers) to see if they are actually teaching the truth. Amen!

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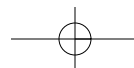
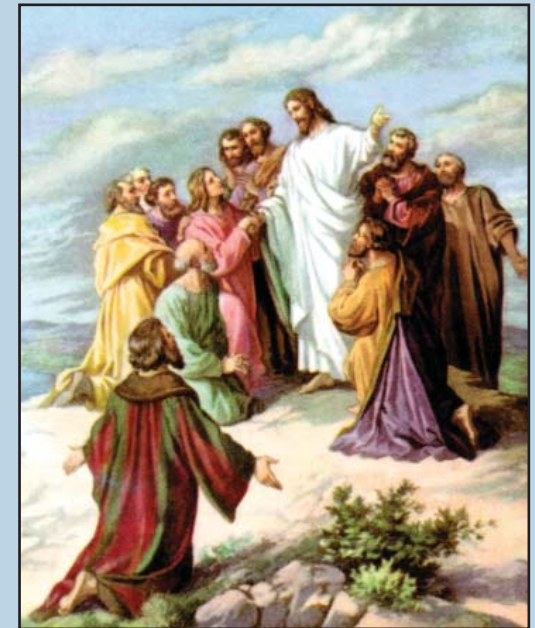
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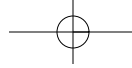
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“From the Beginning”

J.C. Choate





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A large part of the religious world believes and teaches that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is for all who will accept the Lord. Along with that misunderstanding, they teach that all such people should be able to speak in “tongues” and perform miracles. None of these people, however, can restore sight to the blind, give new arms and legs to those who have lost them or were born without them, and neither can they raise the dead.

When challenged to perform this type of visible miracle, they make excuse to get around their inability to do the things the Lord and His apostles did. It is only at some other place and some other time that a supposed miracle of that nature has been done. Most “miracles” consist of curing headaches, backaches, internal cancers, or some other psychological and unseen ailment. But never do they perform an astounding feat contrary to the laws of nature that is later reported as news on the TV or in the newspaper, which would certainly be done if a true miracle had occurred.

To clear some of the confusion, we need first to ask the question: **Who was promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit?** Christ said to the apostles, “*But the Comforter, which is the Holy*

Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14: 26). Again, He said, “*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you*” (John 16:7).

To whom was Jesus speaking? To the apostles, the men He had especially chosen to carry on His work after His return to the Father. He was not speaking to the crowds in general, or to all those who would believe on Him in the coming generations, but He was making the promise of the Comforter only to the chosen Twelve.

Christ continued talking to the apostles, saying, “*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning*” (John 15:26,27). Notice that Christ is making this promise to the apostles, **to those who had been with Him from the beginning**. Clearly, we can see that His language did not include everyone in that day, nor does it apply to us today, for **none of us have been with Him, physically, from the beginning of His personal ministry on earth!**

Judas, one of the chosen Twelve, betrayed Christ and committed suicide. Later, after the Lord’s death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, it was necessary for the apostles to select someone to take Judas’ place. The record in Acts says, “*Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection*” (Acts 1:21-26).

Notice that not just anyone could be chosen to be an apostle, but he had to be an eyewitness, accompanying with the Lord and the other apostles from the time of the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist.

Before His ascension to heaven, Jesus gathered the apostles on the Mount of Olives and said, “*And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high*” (Luke 21:49). He further said, “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:8).

To whom was the Lord speaking when He made these promises? To the apostles, not to

