

Joel Lesson 29

Last week we started looking at the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 and its relation to the prophecy of Joel 2.

And we started with two threshold questions: (1) whether the gift of the Holy Spirit is a gift from the Holy Spirit or is instead the Holy Spirit himself given as a gift; and, (2) whether the gift of the Holy Spirit was a promise for some Christians for some time or a promise for all Christians for all time. And I gave you my opinions on those two questions along with the bases for those opinions.

After looking at those two threshold questions, we then moved on to the big question: what is the gift of the Holy Spirit - or, more precisely, **what are the blessings that come from receiving the Holy Spirit as a gift?**

But before looking at that question, we started looking first at two difficult related sections of the Bible: Acts 8 and Acts 10. Last week, we looked at Acts 8. Today we will look at Acts 10.

So, let's take a closer look at Acts 10 and Acts 11.

In my opinion, the case of Cornelius is one of the most difficult topics in the New Testament. And so we could spend a great deal of time talking about Cornelius, but for our purposes here, I think we can focus our attention on some questions that arise from a single statement made by Peter in Acts 11.

Acts 11:16-17 - And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then **God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ**, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

Here is the key statement from Peter: "God gave the **same** gift to them as he gave to us **when** we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ."

And here are our questions: What is that gift? In what way was that gift the **same** gift that Cornelius was given? And why did Peter say that he was given that gift **when** he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? When was that?

What is the gift in Acts 11:17?

I think Peter answers that question in verse 16: “And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, **but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.**’”

I think the gift given to Cornelius in Acts 11 was the baptism with the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised the Apostles in Acts 1:5 and that John had promised in Mark 1:8.

Acts 1:5 - For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

Mark 1:8 - I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

And what is the baptism with the Holy Spirit?

First, we know the baptism with the Holy Spirit is different from water baptism. That is what both Jesus and John just told us in Acts 1:5 and Mark 1:8. “I have baptized you with water, **but** he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Second, we know the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not the baptism of the great commission. And how do we know that? We know that because the baptism of the great commission is **water** baptism.

Acts 8:36-39 - And as they were going along the road they came to some **water**, and the eunuch said, “See, here is **water**! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the **water**, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the **water**, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

Third, we know that the baptism with the Holy Spirit was just for a limited time. And how do we know that? We know that because later Paul told us that there is only one baptism.

Ephesians 4:5 - One Lord, one faith, **one baptism**.

And we know that one baptism in Ephesians 4:5 is water baptism.

Ephesians 5:26 - That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of **water** with the word.

Fourth, we know that the Apostles received the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

Acts 1:5 - For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit **not many days from now**.

Acts 2:4 - And they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Fifth, we know that Cornelius and his household received the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 10.

Acts 11:16-17 - And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

Sixth, we know that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is called "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 10.

Acts 10:45 - And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because **the gift of the Holy Spirit** was poured out even on the Gentiles.

Seventh, we know that "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 10 is **different** from "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2 in at least one respect - the gift in Acts 2:38 was promised to those who had been baptized, while the gift in Acts 10:45 was given to Cornelius **before** he was baptized in Acts 10:48.

And that important fact is further confirmation that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is **not** the water baptism of Acts 2:38.

Eighth, we know that those two examples - the apostles in Acts 2 and Cornelius in Acts 10 - are the **only** examples of the baptism with the Holy Spirit found anywhere in the Bible.

What can we conclude from all of those facts?

What I conclude is that the baptism with the Holy Spirit was specifically given to confirm the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2:28 that God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh.

That is why we see the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. In fact, that is the explanation that Peter gives for the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 - it confirmed the fulfillment of the promised pouring out on all flesh.

Acts 2:33 - Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, **he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.**

And then we see the baptism with the Holy Spirit one and only one more time - and, again, for the **same purpose** - to show that “all flesh” in Joel 2:28 really means “all flesh.”

That is why we see the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 10, and, again, that is the explanation that Peter gives for the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 10 - it confirmed the fulfillment of the promised pouring out on all flesh.

Acts 11:15-18 - As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit.**’ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?” When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “**Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.**”

But in what way was the gift given to Peter in Acts 11:17 the “same gift” that Cornelius was given?

I think we just answered that question - they were both the baptism with the Holy Spirit. That is **not** the same gift that we find in Acts 2:38, but it is the **same** gift that we find in Acts 1:5 and Acts 2:4.

The conclusion is, I think, inescapable: we are looking at **two different gifts** in Acts 2 - one gift promised to all flesh, and another gift promised only to baptized believers.

But why did Peter say that he was given that gift when he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? When was that?

This is a difficult question. Why? Because Peter believed in Jesus years prior to the events in Acts 2 and Acts 10. We can read about Peter’s introduction to Christ in John 1:40-42. So let’s work backward and see if we can figure this one out.

We know that the gift in Acts 11:17 was the baptism with the Holy Spirit because that is what we are told in Acts 11:16. And we know that Peter received the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 (and

not before) because that is what we are told in Acts 1:5.

Thus, whatever Peter meant when he said “**when we believed** in the Lord Jesus Christ,” he cannot have meant when he **first** personally believed. Why not? Because that happened about three years prior to Acts 2.

So what did Peter mean? I think Peter must have been referring to something that someone believed **in Acts 2**, which was the first time the baptism with the Holy Spirit was given.

Perhaps Peter meant that he, Peter, believed in Acts 2 what Jesus had promised in Acts 1. Or perhaps Peter was using the word “we” to rhetorically include himself with those who **first** believed in Jesus in Acts 2.

I prefer the second explanation - that Peter is grouping himself with the converts in Acts 2. After all, Peter does not say that this was when he **first** believed - he just says that he believed on that day, which was certainly true. I suspect that Peter’s belief was strengthened by the wonderful things that occurred on that great day.

Also, that explanation fits nicely with the previous verse in Acts 11.

Acts 11:15 - As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us **at the beginning**.

The beginning of what? The beginning of the church in Acts 2.

I think the phrase “when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ” is just another way of saying “at the beginning.” Both phrases are describing the great events in Acts 2.

We could say much more about Cornelius, but I think that is enough for our purposes here.

Back now to our question, which we still haven’t answered completely - what does it mean to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit after we obey the gospel? What wonderful blessings from God come as a result of that wonderful gift from God?

When we looked at what it meant for God’s Spirit to be poured out on all flesh, we listed various blessings from God that I think are a part of that great promise.

And when we read the entirety of the New Testament, I think we can identify some other blessings

that are related in some way to the work of the Holy Spirit. For example, the written word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit is one of those blessings.

I have listed the blessings I could find on the Handout for Lesson 29, which is entitled “A Holy Spirit Worksheet.” And why is it called a *worksheet*? Because there are some blank spaces for you to complete!

The first column on the Handout lists various blessings described in the Bible that are related in some way to the work of the Holy Spirit.

The second and third columns show who it is who enjoys (or enjoyed) those blessings and for what time those blessings are (or were) provided.

- The blessing of the gospel and the blessing of the Bible can be enjoyed by everyone. People leave the kingdom of darkness and enter the kingdom of Christ by hearing and obeying the gospel. The blessing of the gospel was available from Acts 2 onward, and the blessing of the Bible was available from its completion date late in the first century onward.
- The baptism with the Holy Spirit, as we saw, was a great blessing, but it occurred only twice, each time for a specific purpose - in Acts 2 and in Acts 10. Those two events were both first century events.
- The prophecies, dreams, and visions were enjoyed by some first century Christians (such as the Apostles and Stephen) and by some first century unbelievers (such as Saul and Cornelius). We know from Zechariah 13:2 and 1 Corinthians 13:10 that this blessing was only a first century blessing.
- The miraculous gifts given by an Apostle was enjoyed by those Christians on whom the Apostles laid their hands. We know from at least 1 Corinthians 13:10 that this blessing was only a first century blessing, and we know from Acts 8 and Acts 19 that this blessing was only for those who had previously been baptized into Christ.
- The Holy Spirit, by whom we are sealed for the day of redemption, bears witness to God that we are children of God, intercedes with God on our behalf, and serves as a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire it. I think these are blessings that have been enjoyed by all of those in the church since the day the church was established in Acts 2. Why? One reason is that two of those blessings include built-in time periods: until we acquire our inheritance and for the day of

redemption. I don't think those blessings are limited to the first century.

Now there may be a few disagreements in the church over some of the information in those first three columns, but I think most of us are in agreement about most of it.

I think the disagreements are likely focused on some of the boxes in the final two columns, which is why I have left some of those boxes blank. I will tell you shortly how I fill them out, but you may want to fill them out differently. So what are in those final two columns?

The fourth and fifth columns on the Handout ask two questions about each of the blessings listed in the first column:

- Was that blessing a blessing that was enjoyed as a result of God pouring out his Spirit on all flesh?
- Was that blessing a blessing that was enjoyed as a result of someone being baptized and receiving the promised gift of the Holy Spirit?

I suspect there is only one box in the fourth column about which we all agree - and that is the box that asks whether the baptism with the Holy Spirit was a blessing that came from the pouring out of God's Spirit. I think Jesus answered that question for us in Acts 1:5. (We might also all agree about the prophecies, dreams, and visions, but I will let you fill that one out.)

And, as for the fifth column, I suspect we all agree that the first three boxes and the final box should **not** be included. Why? Because the blessings that come from hearing God's word (either today from the Bible or back then through prophecies, visions, and dreams) **precede** salvation. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Also, I suspect that most in the church understand that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is **not** the baptism of Acts 2:38, although that is certainly not what we hear from the denominations.

The disagreements in the church about the fifth column are centered on the blessing of miraculous gifts and the blessing of the promised Spirit who is both a seal and a guarantee.

And those disagreements are, of course, okay. I think that for the most part we are firmly in the realm of opinion when it comes to those issues about those final two columns.

And what is my opinion?

- I would place the word “YES” in every box of the fourth column. In my opinion, each of those blessings is a blessing that came as a result of God pouring out his Spirit on **all flesh** as he promised to do in Joel 2 and as he did in Acts 2. And I have already explained why that is my opinion for the fourth column.
- And the fifth column? I would place the word “YES” in **both** of those unanswered boxes.

And why is that my opinion for the fifth column? Based on the articles I read, I think most in the church would choose one box or the other, but **not** both. Why do I choose both?

I think we should turn that question completely around - **why NOT choose both?**

If we can show that both of those blessings are blessings that came or come through the Holy Spirit **after** someone is baptized, then why not include them both as blessings that come from the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself”?

Why would I start by drawing lines through blessings from the Holy Spirit when I am looking for blessings from the Holy Spirit? Yes, we may find that some of those blessings were given for a specific purpose at a specific purpose - but why must that be true of all of them?

So, let’s look at each of the blessings, and rather than asking why we should **include** it, let’s ask why we might want to **exclude** it.

Let’s start with the first blessings - miraculous gifts - and ask why we might exclude that blessing as a blessing that came in the first century from the promised gift of Acts 2:38.

One reason why we might exclude the miraculous gifts is that the gift of Acts 2:38 was promised to “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” but those miraculous gifts were enjoyed only by **some** living in the first century and by **no one** at all living **after** the first century.

Is that reason enough to exclude miraculous gifts from the blessings promised in Acts 2:38? I think not.

As long as we can find **some** blessings that apply to **all** Christians for **all** time, then I think the wide scope of Acts 2:39 will be satisfied.

But that would leave open the possibility that some Christians might have received **additional** blessings in the first century. I don't see any requirement in these verses that every Christian must receive exactly the same blessings as every other Christian.

The promise is that we will all receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, not that we will all receive the same blessings from that gift.

And if the concern is that such a thing would mean that God is showing partiality, we know that is not the case. No matter how we end up on these issues, we know that some in the first century performed miracles while we do not. That does **not** mean that God showed partiality to those first century Christians.

If we include the miraculous gifts among those blessings, then we know that some first century Christians received some blessings that we do not have today.

Another reason why we might exclude the miraculous gifts is that those gifts, even when they were received, were not received immediately upon baptism but rather only later (if at all) after an **additional requirement** was satisfied - having an Apostle lay his hands on you.

Is that reason enough to exclude miraculous gifts from the blessings promised in Acts 2:38? I think not.

And the reason is similar to what we just saw. As long as we can find **some** blessings that apply to **all** Christians for **all** time and that are received as soon as we are baptized, then I think the wide scope of Acts 2:39 will be satisfied.

But that would leave open the possibility that some Christians might have received additional blessings in the first century after satisfying some **additional** requirement.

In fact, we see some additional requirements elsewhere in the Bible such as **believing** in God and **confessing** that Jesus is the Son of God. Perhaps **some** blessings had **yet another additional requirement** involving a personal meeting with an Apostle.

And so, while some may have the opinion that those first century miraculous gifts should be struck off the list of blessings that come with the gift of Acts 2:38, I do not plan to strike them off my list. I think they can be included as long as we recognize that they were blessings available **only** during the first

century and that they were not the only blessings.

**What about the so-called non-miraculous blessings that Christians have through the Holy Spirit?
Is there a reason they should be excluded?**

And what do I mean by **non-miraculous**? There are many ways we could attack that question, but perhaps the simplest answer is this: a non-miraculous blessing from the Holy Spirit is a blessing that we don't know we have absent being told by God that we have it.

For example, I think the Bible tells us that God has written his name on every one of his faithful children. I think that is what it means when the Bible says in Ephesians 1:13-14 that we are “**sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.**”

Is it a blessing to know that God has written his name on me? Yes, it absolutely is a blessing. It is a tremendous blessing!

And how do I know that I have received that tremendous blessing? The only way I know I have that blessing is because God has told me that I have it. I can't feel it. I can't see it. But I can most certainly know it, and I know it because I have faith in God. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, **the conviction of things not seen**” (Hebrews 11:1). God's name is written on me. I know that!

That is what I call a non-miraculous blessing. **And our question here is whether there is some reason for us to exclude such blessings from the blessings we are promised in Acts 2:38.**

One reason to exclude non-miraculous blessings from the gift of the Holy Spirit might be that no one would ever have expected to receive such blessings.

When people thought about the Holy Spirit, they thought about miracles, and the blessings from the pouring out that we see in Acts 2 were miraculous. And so, who would have expected non-miraculous blessings in verse 38?

Is that reason enough to exclude non-miraculous blessings from the blessings promised in Acts 2:38? I think not.

First, is it really true that the pouring out of the Spirit in Acts 2 involved **only** overt miraculous

blessings? Wasn't the first gospel sermon in Acts 2 also one of those blessings? Isn't that what the people were hearing on that day? That first gospel sermon is certainly on my list!

But, second, there were a lot of unexpected things that happened in Acts 2! I think Joel himself might have been surprised, and I think even angels might have been surprised (1 Peter 1:10-12). And I think Peter himself was surprised later in Acts 10.

Joel 2 is a **prophecy** about Acts 2, and prophecies almost always announce something new. And it may have been the case that some of things that were new about the Holy Spirit on that day had to be new **because they were not possible prior to the cross**.

Another reason to exclude non-miraculous blessings from the gift of the Holy Spirit might be that we don't really know how they work. How are we sealed with the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit intercede to God on our behalf when we pray? How is the Holy Spirit a guarantee of our inheritance?

Is that reason enough to exclude non-miraculous blessings from the blessings promised in Acts 2:38? I say no.

In fact if we go down this road I don't think that the non-miraculous blessings will be the only blessings on the chopping block! Does anyone know how miracles work?

How the blessings work is not the issue. The issue is whether God has promised those blessings - and I think he has - some to all Christians for all time and some to some Christians for a limited time.

In short, I think there are some blessings from the gift of the Holy Spirit that all Christians have in common, but I also think there are some blessings from that great gift that were enjoyed only before the New Testament was completed.

Let's focus now on the non-miraculous blessings that I believe we have today from the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What are those non-miraculous blessings, and why do I think we have them today? Let's start with that second question first.

I think we have blessings from the gift of the Holy Spirit today because I think we have been given the Holy Spirit today. And I think there are many verses (in addition to Acts 2:38) that tell us that.

- **Luke 11:13** - If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father **give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**
- **Acts 5:32** - And we are witnesses to these things, **and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.**
- **Romans 5:5** - And hope does not put us to shame, because **God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**
- **Romans 8:9** - You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. **Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.**
- **1 Corinthians 3:16** - Do you not know that you are God's temple and that **God's Spirit dwells in you?**
- **1 Corinthians 6:19** - Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?** You are not your own.
- **Galatians 3:2** - Let me ask you only this: **Did you receive the Spirit** by works of the law or **by hearing with faith?**
- **2 Timothy 1:14** - By **the Holy Spirit who dwells within us**, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.
- **1 John 3:24** - **Whoever** keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, **by the Spirit whom he has given us.**
- **1 John 4:13** - By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because **he has given us of his Spirit.**

That is why I believe that we today have the gift of the Holy Spirit as promised in Acts 2:38.

But what are those non-miraculous blessings that we enjoy from the great gift? Again, I think there are quite a few verses that describe those blessings.

- **Romans 8:16** - The Spirit himself **bears witness** with our spirit that we are children of God.

- **Romans 8:26-27** - Likewise **the Spirit helps us** in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but **the Spirit himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because **the Spirit intercedes for the saints** according to the will of God.
- **2 Corinthians 1:22** - And who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts **as a guarantee**.
- **2 Corinthians 5:5** - He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit **as a guarantee**.
- **Ephesians 1:13-14** - In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it**, to the praise of his glory.
- **Ephesians 4:30** - And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom **you were sealed for the day of redemption**.

The Holy Spirit bears witness to God that we are children of God. The Holy Spirit intercedes with God on our behalf. The Holy Spirit communicates with God about our prayers. The Holy Spirit operates as a guarantee of our inheritance. God writes his name on us - he sets his seal to us - with the Holy Spirit. And how long will God do that? Until we acquire possession of our inheritance and until the day of redemption.

That is *some of what* the Bible says the Holy Spirit does for a child of God, and I believe God is still doing those things today for his children.

And why do I say that is “some of what” the Spirit does for a child of God? I say that because those are things that the Spirit does *directly* for a Christian, but that is far from all that the Spirit does for us. Every time we open our Bibles, we find and enjoy great blessings from the Holy Spirit of God! Every time we open our Bibles, we find the Holy Spirit bearing witness to us.

- **Hebrews 10:15** - And the Holy Spirit also **bears witness to us**; for after **saying**, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds.”

A great part of the pouring out of God’s Spirit on all flesh is the pouring out of God’s written word to

all flesh. And a great part of the blessings we enjoy from the Holy Spirit come from the inspired word of God that we have through the Holy Spirit and that is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).

So where are we? Which is it? Are the blessings that we enjoy from the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 the miraculous gifts enjoyed by first century Christians? Or are the blessings that we enjoy from the gift of Holy Spirit the seal, the guarantee, and the intercession enjoyed by all Christians across all the centuries?

So which is it - **A or B**? My answer is **yes!** My answer is **A and B!**

Why do we think we have to choose? What is it about the great promise from Joel 2 that has us suddenly wanting to draw lines through what the Spirit has done for Christians in the past or through what the Spirit is doing for Christians in the present?

Is there something in the Bible that says that the blessings we enjoy from the gift of the Holy Spirit could not have changed over time? In fact, don't we know that they did change over time?

Doesn't the Bible itself - in both the Old Testament and the New Testament - tell us that the Spirit would interact with people differently in the first century? Didn't Zechariah tell us that prophecy would cease in the first century? Didn't Paul tell us the same thing?

But does that mean the Holy Spirit ceased to do anything for Christians? Did Zechariah say that **everything** would cease? We know that the work of the Spirit changed; did the work of the Spirit **stop**? Where is the verse saying that the work of the Holy Spirit **stopped**?

So where are we? Here is where I am: **I think God promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who obey the gospel throughout all time.**

As for what that means to the one who receives that gift, I think some of those blessings were limited to the first century when the children of God did not yet have the complete word of God.

I think that we today receive that gift of the Holy Spirit when we obey the gospel, and I think we enjoy certain **non-miraculous** blessings from that gift that were also enjoyed by those who received the gift in first century.

So, am I saying that the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians in some way today? Yes, I am saying that, and I think Paul is saying that:

- **1 Corinthians 3:16** - Do you not know that you are God's temple and that **God's Spirit dwells in you?**

But what do I mean when I say that the Holy Spirit dwells in us “**in some way.**” **What way? How** does the Holy Spirit dwell in all Christians for all time?

A great deal of ink has been spilled in attempting to answer that question, but perhaps we can simplify the issue by first asking a related question that should be a very easy question for all us to answer. After we answer this easy question, we can go back to the hard question.

And here is the easy question: **How does my own spirit dwell in me?**

That question should be easy, right? After all, that is something that I know is happening, and that is something that I experience 24 hours a day. Surely we can answer that question, right? That question should be a piece of cake for us, and then we can move on to the harder question. Does that sound like a good plan?

It may sound like a good plan, but it is a terrible plan. Why? Because no one knows how the spirit of a person dwells in that person. James 2:26 tells us that “the body apart from the spirit is dead,” but how does that work? We just don’t know.

As a Christian, I know that my spirit is not limited to my brain because one day my brain will be in the grave while I am elsewhere. But how is my spirit related to my brain? Where is my spirit located? How does my spirit enter my body when I am born? How does my spirit leave my body when I die?

No one knows - and yet we sometimes seem very confident that we can answer that same question about the spirit of God!

And, yes, I have read many of the arguments. The Holy Spirit is in you, but not with you. Or the Holy Spirit is with you, but not in you. The Holy Spirit can’t dwell in people because that would mean that the Holy Spirit would be divided into pieces. The Holy Spirit dwells in us only through the Word, or in conjunction with the word, or separate and apart from the word. And on and on and on.

Here’s my plan. When I can tell you how my own spirit dwells in me, then I will move on to the harder question of how the Spirit of God dwells in me. But until then, I am not going to speculate.

Instead, I will just accept what the Bible tells me on that subject - that the Holy Spirit of God dwells in all Christians for all time in some way. And I will just leave the “how” up to God.

#JOEL