

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Introduction:

- A. Acts 2:38 is one of the more controversial passages in the Bible.
- B. A less discussed part of its controversial nature is the meaning and application of the phrase “gift of the Holy Spirit.”
- C. What is “the gift of the Holy Spirit”? To whom was it promised?

I. background:

- A. It behooves us to humbly, cautiously and open-mindedly approach the subject. - 1 Thessalonians 5:21
- B. We will use two universally recognized rules of Bible study to arrive at our conclusions: (1) examine the text in its context and (2) notice what other passages say on the subject.

II. What is the context of our text?

- A. The Holy Spirit was miraculously poured out on the apostles.- Acts 2:1-4
- B. They spoke in tongues as the result. - Acts 2:5-11
- C. To explain this miracle, Peter appealed to the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 pertaining to the promise of the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit, the destruction of the Jewish state and salvation to those who would “call on the name of the Lord.” - Acts 2:12-21
- D. Peter expounded Joel 2:28-32 by informing them who the Lord is upon whom they were to call. - Acts 2:22-36
- E. The audience earnestly inquired what to do. - Acts 2:37
- F. Peter explained how to call on the Lord’s name. - Acts 2:38
- G. What is “the promise” of Acts 2:39?
 - 1. that of the context, that of Peter’s sermon and text, i.e., the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit and salvation by calling on the Lord’s name
 - 2. This is what Peter promised in Acts 2:38.
 - a. “remission of sins” = “Shall be saved”
 - b. “gift of the Holy Spirit” = “I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh”

H. A summary of the context reinforces this conclusion.

- 1. The Holy Spirit was miraculously poured out on the apostles.
- 2. The audience inquired what this meant.
- 3. Peter, in explanation, quoted Joel 2:28-32, a prophecy of the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- 4. Explaining this passage, Peter promised “the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

I. Would it not be strange for the apostle, in response to a question about the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and in explanation of a text dealing with the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, with no explanation at all, to promise his audience a non-miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit?

III. Will an examination of other passages confirm our conclusion?

A. The phrase “gift of the Holy Spirit” is only found twice in the New Testament (**SeedMaster** computer Bible program). - Acts 2:38; Acts 10:45

B. What is the “gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 10:44-47?

1. Both Luke and Peter identify it as the reception of the Holy Spirit Himself. - verses 44,47

2. Luke indicates it was miraculous. - verse 46

C. Thus, the “gift of the Holy Spirit” was the miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit.

IV. Does this mean the miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit is for us?

A. Mark 16:15-18 is parallel to Acts 2:38-39, for the latter fulfilled the former.

1. Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:14-36 was in fulfillment of Mark 16:15.

2. The conditional salvation offered in Acts 2:38 fulfilled Mark 16:16.

3. The promise of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38-39 fulfilled Mark 16:17-18.

4. Both the promises, Mark 16:17-18 and Acts 2:38-39, although not limited by their immediate contexts, are limited by other passages as to scope, purpose and duration.

5. This does not mean the promise of salvation in either passage is so limited, for no other passages so limit them.

B. Acts 2:16-21 is parallel to Acts 2:38-39, for the latter explained the former. - verses 39

1. The “gift of the Holy Spirit” of Acts 2:38 is the outpouring of the Spirit of Acts 2:17-18.

2. The “remission of sins” of Acts 2:38 is the salvation of Acts 2:21.

3. The promise of the Holy Spirit in both passages, although not limited by their immediate contexts, is limited by other passages as to scope, purpose and duration.

4. This does not mean the promise of salvation in either passage is so limited, for no other passages so limit them.

Conclusion:

A. The “gift of the Holy Spirit” was the miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit.

B. This was a general promise to Christians of the first century comprehensive of the supernatural activities of the Spirit through them.

C. It is not a pledge of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a nonmiraculous manner for Christians of all centuries.