

Fact Sheet for “An Affirming Sign” Acts 19:1-10

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Among other questions I have asked myself about this passage three stand out.

Why did Paul ask them early on, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

Is that a question we ask people? Don't we ask instead, “Have you asked Jesus to be your savior?” How would you answer now if you were asked, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” What would go through your mind? How would you know for certain?

Why did they receive the Holy Spirit only when Paul laid his hands on them?

Did you receive the Holy Spirit this way? Have you missed something in your spiritual life?

When they received the Holy Spirit they spoke in tongues and prophesied. Why didn't that happen to me?

ESV 1 ¶ And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ^{2a} And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

Those “disciples” were those that had followed John the Baptist's teaching.

1st question (see Romans 8:9 first)

The Holy Spirit makes a huge difference in a person's values, in how they think, in what drives them. Those of us who became Christians as children often are not as aware of this. You can see a difference in Adults and children alike. You know instinctively when a person is merely going through the motions.

^{2b} And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

They only knew part of the story.

^{3a} And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John's baptism.” ⁴ And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.”

Notice that Paul did not tell them about the Holy Spirit, but about Jesus Christ. He filled in the missing pieces in their knowledge of John the Baptist's preaching.

⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

This is the only known instance of re-baptism in the Bible.

2nd question:

Acts is a transitional book. The reception of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands is found only in two, possible three, passages... Here and...

Philip had gone to Samaria and began to preach Jesus (Acts 8:14-17). See Paul's Damascus Rd. experience (Acts 9:17). These happened at the very beginning of the church. It is not seen later on in the NT.

3rd question:

Consider the times we see speaking in tongues in Acts.

(2:1-4) Those in the upper room spoke in tongues – To the Jewish audience at Pentecost, Shavuot – Initial preaching of the Gospel – To validate the message

(10:44-47) The Gentiles spoke in tongues – Peter and other believers heard – To validate the salvation of Gentiles

(19:1-7) Those who had followed John the Baptist – To validate the complete Gospel of Jesus Christ

Each of these occurred when the Gospel message was breaking new ground in the very early church.

Prophesying is rarely, but not regularly, connected with the Holy Spirit's distinct moving in a person's life (1 Samuel 10:10; Luke 1:67; here)

Why didn't these things happen to me? It is a different time. God has a different purpose.

⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

Now verses 8-10 show the real life effect of either having the Holy Spirit or not having the Holy Spirit.

⁸ ¶ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

Unbelief in Jesus Christ and not having the Holy Spirit go hand in hand. Those who trod this path often actively oppose the Gospel. It is more than a philosophical difference, or a difference in "religious" beliefs. It is a difference of heart, of spiritual sight. It makes no sense to expect that those who reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ and who do not have Holy Spirit... It makes no sense to expect that they would follow the Bible, pursue Godly holiness, or even be favorable to Christians. Just the opposite is what makes best sense. Evolution would make more sense than creation. Science would always trump religion. Moral standards would be ever changing. The best politics would be entirely secular. Christians could be problematic.

¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Watch brand new Christians.

Watch for the moving of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

This is one of the affirming signs of the truth of our faith!