

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XLVIII. Clarifying The Transitional Nature Of Acts

(Acts 19:1-7)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 19:1-7 records how Paul met some disciples of John who had not even heard about the Holy Spirit, so he told them about Christ, baptized them in Christ's name, laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.
- C. When this event is viewed with the other events of tongues speaking and the reception of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, contrary to what Charismatics teach, Acts is shown to be a transitional book that cannot be used as a doctrinal source on receiving the Holy Spirit today. We view this passage for much needed insight today:

II. Clarifying The Transitional Nature Of Acts, Acts 19:1-7.

- A. A unique event occurred in Acts 19:1-7 where unlike other cases in Paul's missionary ministry, some disciples he met who had not heard of Christ came to believe in Him, receive the Holy Spirit, and speak in tongues:
 - 1. When Paul returned to Ephesus, he found some disciples, and when he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, they said that they had not even heard about a Holy Spirit, Acts 19:1-2.
 - 2. Paul pressed them on the issue, asking these disciples what type of baptism they had received, and they reported that they were baptized unto the baptism by John the Baptizer, Acts 19:3 with Luke 3:1-18.
 - 3. The apostle then clarified that John had truly baptized the baptism unto repentance, but that they should also trust in the Messiah who would come after him, and this Messiah was Jesus Christ, Acts 19:4.
 - 4. Upon hearing about Christ, these twelve disciples of John were baptized in Christ's name, and when Paul laid his hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues and prophesied, Acts 19:5-7.
- B. Charismatic Christians use passages like Acts 19:1-7 to teach that one must receive the Holy Spirit after becoming believers by the laying on of hands by a minister, but "the reception of the Holy Spirit in Acts does not follow any set pattern" as follows (Ibid., p. 409):
 - 1. In Acts 10:44, the Holy Spirit came on Gentile believers before they had been baptized in Christ's name.
 - 2. In contrast, in Acts 8:12-16 with 19:6, He came at the time of or after baptism, and He came by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (in Acts 8:17 and 19:6).
 - 3. Yet, in Romans 8:9 at the close of Paul's third missionary journey "during the 'three months' he was in Greece (Acts 20:3)," Paul wrote that anyone who did not have the Holy Spirit was not saved, Ibid., p. 436!
- C. To harmonize all these events with Paul's claim in Romans 8:9, we note that the coming of the Holy Spirit with the sign of tongues speaking occurred in the book of Acts **only to certify to Jews who were present at the time** God's work to include a new group of people in the body of the Universal Church (as follows):
 - 1. In the case of the Spirit's empowering and giving the gift of tongues in Acts 2:1-4, God validated for the Hebrews who were present the ministry of God in the Early Church of believing Hebrews.
 - 2. In the case of the Spirit's coming in Acts 8:14-17, God validated for the Hebrew apostles Peter and John present God's work to place Samaritans, people with mixed Hebrew and Gentile blood, into the Church.
 - 3. In the third case of the Spirit's coming with tongues in Acts 10:44-47, God validated the inclusion of Gentiles in the Church. This event occurred without the apostolic laying on of hands as God likely meant to verify **strongly** to Hebrews present their need to accept uncircumcised Gentile believers in the Church.
 - 4. In the fourth case of the Spirit's coming with tongues in Acts 19:1-7, God validated the entrance of Jews who had been ignorant of Christ into the Church once they had learned of Him and believed in Him.
 - 5. With all possible cases of believers having validated who belonged in the Church, Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit comes on all who trust in Christ at salvation, what occurs today, Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13.
- D. The sign of tongues was predicted in Deuteronomy 28:49 as a warning of judgment to Israel, serving in the Early Church era alone to warn Israel to trust in Christ to escape national judgment, 1 Corinthians 14:20-22.

Lesson: *The coming of the Holy Spirit with tongues was a temporary sign to Israel in the transitional book of Acts that the Church was a work of God, and Israel needed to trust in Christ as Messiah to escape national judgment.*

Application: *May we not try to receive the Holy Spirit by trying to speak in tongues today, for when we trusted in Christ, we received the Spirit, and the gift of tongues no longer exists since its Biblical purpose no longer applies.*