

## *Step #1*

### **You Need All the Pieces of the Puzzle To See the Full Picture**

Jesus is the beginning and end of every person's salvation. Jesus very simply yet powerfully proclaimed, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). But, what does this mean? Is it a matter of just claiming Jesus as your Lord and Savior (as most churches will tell you), or is there more to it?

Before we help you explore the answer, let's examine two common misconceptions embraced by most churchgoers today. The first is based on probably one of the most quoted scriptures of all time (John 3:16), and the second concerns the concept of "deathbed repentance" founded upon on the thief on the cross.

#### **What Is "BELIEVE"?**

Churchgoers love to quote John 3:16 which states, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Most people would assume the word "believeth" in this scripture simply means acknowledge, or accept as true, but that assumption would be incorrect. Instead, it means something much deeper.

The Greek word from which "believeth" has been interpreted is "pisteuo," the root word of which is "peitho" with the meanings "to suffer one's self to be persuaded" and "to listen to, obey, yield to, comply with." So, anyone who chooses to believe in Jesus for the sake of their salvation must heed and apply *everything* He ever said about the Kingdom of God and eternal life. The emphasis is on regarding and then obeying Jesus' instructions. **This is clearly pointed out in Hebrews 5:9 which states that "being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."**

Given the above, you can see how dangerous it is to base your salvation on just one verse – or even a handful of verses – from the Bible. Rather, it's imperative to consider the fullness of the message Jesus proclaimed, and we'll get to that very soon.

#### **What Is "PARADISE"?**

Churchgoers also love to refer to the thief on the cross in the gospel of Luke to support their belief in eternal life upon repentance. In the fading moments of his life, after having

joined the other thief in ridiculing Christ, the one thief finally realized that Jesus truly was the Son of God. Whereas two other gospels (Matthew and Mark) actually report both of the thieves spewing insults at Jesus, only the gospel of Luke records the one thief rebuking the other and then pleading with Jesus, saying, "...Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Jesus' reply to him (Luke 23:43, "...Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise") seems positive on the surface, but a closer examination reveals otherwise.

Again, we must be careful not to confuse our own use of the English language to impose definitions upon scripture. "Paradise" in Luke 23 is based upon the Greek word "paradeisos" which means grove, or park. The root word of "paradeisos" is "pardec" which also means park, preserve, enclosed garden, forest. So, "paradise" is not referring to heaven, the Kingdom of God, or eternal life with Jesus in any way. Rather, it's referring to the place where both Jesus and the thief indeed went that day. Where was that place? It was the grave, or tomb in a burial garden. Jesus was simply buried that day, and he remained in the grave for three days before he was resurrected. So, Jesus was simply telling the thief that all he could expect "today" was to be in a grave just as Jesus would be, too.

After all, if Jesus earlier proclaimed that "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5), how *could* the thief gain entrance into the Kingdom, for he had neither been baptized in water nor filled with the power of the Holy Spirit? But, we're getting a little ahead of ourselves. Suffice to say that the communication between Jesus and the thief clearly does not line up with the requirements for salvation. It's also important to note that *nowhere* else in the Bible is paradise used to refer to heaven or the Kingdom of God!

## Interlude

So far, we've been writing from the point of view that the reader is somewhat familiar with the Bible and especially with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. However, this may not be the case for you. Before anyone can hope in life after death, they must first be aware of how salvation is made possible by the living God, their Creator.

If you don't fully know how Jesus fits in with the rest of the Bible, we suggest you read the "Who Is God?" digital flipbook on our Kidzone page. Even if you think you know enough, we still suggest you read it. You'll be surprised how many pieces of the puzzle finally fall into place for you. For example, did you know that Noah's father and grandfather were alive at the same time as Adam? No wonder Noah knew about God! God used to spend time with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. So, all the stories about Adam and Eve in the Garden – and those from their following exile – would have been passed down first hand from Adam to Methuselah and Lamech and then to Noah.

Although “Who Is God?” is written to appeal to a younger audience, the facts are still there, solidly based on scripture, and you’ll most likely enjoy how the book clearly, concisely, and accurately ties together the full picture – from Creation right through to the end times described in Revelation. We’ve never come across another book that does this.

So, go to Kidzone on our main menu bar and read “Who Is God” and when you come back to this article things will make better sense for you... (INTERLUDE) ...

## **Who Is Jesus?**

Welcome back. Now would be a good time to share a little more information about Jesus. Jesus was the Word of God made flesh upon earth. He is the Son of God. He is the Messiah (promised deliverer) spoken of by Old Testament prophets, and later in the Bible He is referred to as the Christ:

*Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name **Immanuel.**” Note: Immanuel means “**God with us.**”*

*Isaiah 9:6, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”*

*Isaiah 53:3-7, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”*

*Matthew 1:16, “And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born **Jesus, who is called Christ.**”*

*Matthew 16:16, “And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”*

*John 1:14, “**And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,** (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”*

Jesus came to this earth to preach about the Kingdom of God and to introduce the New Covenant requirements. Under the Old Covenant, God’s people were expected to follow

the law in order to remain in right standing with Him. The law included the Ten Commandments *plus* hundreds of other laws governing all aspects of living a holy, healthy, harmonious, and prosperous life. However, the New Covenant opened up a brand new way for people to be saved from death. That way is through Jesus.

### **Only by Jesus**

Jesus died by being crucified upon a cross, and he was brought back to life after spending three days in a burial tomb, and it's when you – in a sense – join Jesus in these experiences that eternal life in the Kingdom of God is made possible for you. No, you're not required to hang on a cross and then wait for God to raise you from the dead. Rather, your death is symbolized by water baptism (burying your "old life" in water), and your new life begins when you are filled you with the power of the Holy Spirit (the *holy* Spirit of God):

*Romans 6: 4 & 6, "Therefore **we are buried with him by baptism into death...our old man is crucified with him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."*

*1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but **quickened by the Spirit:**" (Note: "Quickened" is based on the Greek word "zoopoieo" which means "to cause to live, make alive, give life.")*

*Ephesians 2:1, "**And you hath he quickened, who were dead** in trespasses and sins;"*

*Colossians 2:13, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;**"*

Sharing in Jesus' death and new life experience is all you really need to know in order to come to God, looking to be saved from the judgment that awaits those who are never reconciled to their Creator:

*Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven."*

*1 John 2:17, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but **he that doeth the will of God** abideth for ever."*

*2 Corinthians 5:17-18, "**Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away;** behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, **who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ**, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;"*

However, repentance is the first and most important step toward this reconciliation, for without a humble heart (which must continue *all* the days of our walk with God) no one can expect to receive anything of the Lord:

*Matthew 4:17, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"*

*Matthew 9:13, "...for I am not come to call the righteous, but **sinner to repentance.**"*

*1 Peter 5:5, "God resisteth the proud, and **giveth grace to the humble.**"*

Your repentance need not be complicated. If you're tempted to think otherwise, be encouraged by Acts 2:41 which records three thousand people being added unto the followers of Jesus the very day they were preached to. This is what it was like for the first believers.

(Back in those days, they were called believers, or "people of the way" – of the way of Jesus. The unbelievers first used the term "Christian" as a derogatory term! Although, the word "Christ" comes from the Greek word "Christos" which means "anointed," so the term Christian is technically correct – Christians *are* anointed by Jesus with the Holy Spirit!)

### **Look to the Apostles**

The followers of Jesus "went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). This work for the Lord began with the apostles. In their day, people with open hearts and ears didn't need long, drawn-out, intricate explanations (unlike many people today who have been confused by a multitude of false doctrines and spiritual concepts). If someone wanted to get right with God, it really was very straightforward – and it still is! They were told to:

- Repent: Recognize – *and* desire to turn from – the error of their fleshly ways, being humbly grateful for Jesus' momentous sacrifice on their behalf.
- Be baptized: By full immersion in water [the Greek word "baptizo" means "to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk)"] in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins.
- Seek for the Holy Spirit: Pray and ask God for the anointing of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. It's God's promised gift that Jesus gives to all those that obey Him.

The apostles knew the Holy Spirit was a promise of God, so they passed on this expectation to others:

*Luke 11:12-13, "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father,*

*will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: **how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?***”

*Acts 2:38-39, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For **the promise** is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”*

They even recalled the series of prophecies and directives about the Holy Spirit that Jesus had declared:

*John 3:5, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

*John 7:37-39, “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (**But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.**)”*

*John 16:7, “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 14:26, “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 15:26, “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:”*

*Luke 24:49, “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.**”*

*Acts 1: 4-5, “And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for **the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me**. For John truly baptized with water; but **ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.**”*

Let’s take a pause in the story of the apostles for a moment. Note the emphasis on *future expectation* in John 7:37-39 above. It was necessary for Jesus to depart from this earth – that is, ascend to the Father – in order for the Holy Spirit to come upon believers. The word “glorified” refers to Jesus’ complete death, resurrection, and ascension experience. And, as you read further through the gospel of John and then into the book of Acts, you

realize that the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred on the day of Pentecost, ten days *after* Jesus' ascension.

It's also important to realize that the presence of God *on this earth* in the form of Jesus was then replaced by the presence of God *within believers* in the form of the Holy Spirit. This is a profound concept to consider!

Jesus clearly proclaimed to His disciples, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for **he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.** I will not leave you comfortless: **I will come to you.**" (John 14:16-18). Jesus was reassuring His followers that though they recognized who He was dwelling *with* them, He would soon be living *inside* of them. One of the titles of Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1, John 1:14, Revelation 19:13), and the Bible also describes the infilling of the Holy Spirit as the Word of God coming to dwell within the body, the will of God transcribed upon the heart and mind. It's by obedience to this indwelling power that God considers a person to be righteous i.e. in right standing with Him:

*Hebrews 10:15-17, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."*

*Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."*

Now, continuing our story of the apostles, you're probably wondering how they knew when the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them. They knew because the experience was a tangible one. Hence, they could also determine for certain whenever someone else was later baptized in the Spirit:

*Acts 2:1-4, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. **And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**" Note: Don't be fooled by typical kids stories that illustrate the disciples with visible flames of fire above their heads. When you examine the Greek from which the verses above were interpreted into English, you'll see that they refer to all the people (there were 120 of them) suddenly receiving the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues like a fire and great noise of wind rushing through the room. "Cloven tongues" refers to the various languages with which they began to speak.*

*Acts 10:44-48 "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy*

*Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, **which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?** And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”*

*Note: This story receives particular attention in the Bible because it was the very first time a Gentile was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. (A Gentile was a non-Jew. The Jews were just some of the descendants of the Israelites. And, the Israelites were God’s chosen – or specially blessed – people from the days of Abraham.) Up until Cornelius, the message of salvation through Jesus had only been deliberately brought to the Jews, but after the majority of the Jews rejected Jesus, the way was opened up unto all. Peter retells his experience with Cornelius in Acts 11 as follows:*

*Acts 11:13-18, “And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; **Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.** And as I began to speak, **the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.** Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, **Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.**”*

*Acts 19:1-6, “And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, **Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?** And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. **When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.***

When preaching, the apostles didn’t particularly emphasize speaking in tongues as the first manifesting sign of receiving the Holy Spirit. (By the way, the terms “filled with the Holy Spirit,” and “baptized in the Holy Spirit,” and “anointed with the Holy Spirit,” and “received the Holy Spirit” are *all* synonymous.) They didn’t need to. It was just a given expectation based on their tangible experience and based on what Jesus had told them:

*Acts 1:8, “...**ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.**”*

*Mark 16:17-18, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; **they shall speak with new tongues;** They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”*



Although, the apostles did soon discover the fullness of the power of the Spirit they'd been given, so they spoke more about the gifts of the Holy Spirit as they wrote letters to the various churches they founded. The epistles (letters) of the Bible are where we can find more references to speaking in tongues, in particular the book of Corinthians:

*1 Corinthians 14:2, "For he that speaketh in an **unknown tongue** speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for **no man understandeth him**; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries."*

*1 Corinthians 14:4, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue **edifieth himself...**"*

*1 Corinthians 14:14-15, "For if I pray in an **unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful**. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."*

The apostles also wrote about the other gifts of the Holy Spirit (Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Faith, Gifts of Healing, Working of Miracles, Prophecy, Discerning of Spirits, Interpretation of Tongues). Anyone filled with the Holy Spirit has access to all these precious gifts, to use when needed – mostly for the benefit of others and for the glory of God.

It's important to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is a "He," not an "it." He, the *holy* Spirit of God, is a spiritual power and He is part of God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a single yet whole spiritual entity (i.e. being). You either have (i.e. are filled with) the Holy Spirit, or you don't – it's as simple as that. But, you sure know when you *do* have it! You are complete in Christ once you're born again of water and of the Holy Spirit. From then on, it's up to you to *use* the power God has given you!

*1 Corinthians 12:13, "For **by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

*Ephesians 4:4, "**There is one body, and one Spirit**, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;"*

*Colossians 2:10, "And **ye are complete in him**, which is the head of all principality and power:"*

*John 1:16, "And **of his fulness** have all we received..."*

*1 John 2:27, "But **the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you**, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as **the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth**, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."*

1 Corinthians 2:4-5, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in **demonstration of the Spirit and of power**: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the **power of God**."

1 Timothy 4:14, "**Neglect not the gift that is in thee...**"

Romans 8:14, "For as many as are **led by the Spirit of God**, they are the sons of God."

## Man-Made Distortions

Since the time of the apostles, some people have developed a distorted understanding of the Holy Spirit, generally because they don't want to admit they don't have the anointing. Along with comments based on John 3:16 and also the thief on the cross, both of which we have already addressed, many people like to quote 1 Corinthians 12 to support their belief that the gifts can be divided. They will say that not everyone who is filled with the Holy Spirit will speak in tongues. However, yet again this is a misconception that has developed because of a failure to consider scripture in context.

1 Corinthians is a letter written by the apostle Paul to the church in Corinth, and all of the comments and instructions are based on what Paul believes should and shouldn't be happening *during their church gatherings*. This is an important point to digest. Again, everything Paul says concerns their *group's conduct*.

Now, considering the fullness of Paul's two letters to the Corinthian church, we can clearly determine that they were wayward in some key areas. Overall, Paul is seeking to correct them and bring things back into line with the will of God. It's obvious that one of the things the church members had begun to do is abuse the use of the gifts during their gatherings. Paul's intent in 1 Corinthians 12 is to explain that not everyone is going to get a chance to use all the gifts of the Spirit each time they meet. He explains that all of the gifts come from the same source, yet it should be left to God to move upon each and every person as *He* wills to bring about the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Paul further puts the gifts into proper perspective when he compares speaking in tongues privately versus speaking in tongues when in the church group. His intent is *not* to

discredit speaking in tongues, but rather to differentiate between the gifts that are more for personal edification (strengthening) versus those gifts that bring benefit to others. He also details how to keep things “decent and in order”:

*1 Corinthians 14:18-19, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet **in the church** I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.”*

*1 Corinthians 14:22-40, “Wherefore **tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not**: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. **If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?...**If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. **For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints...Let all things be done decently and in order.**” Note: The words “and all speak with tongues” implies they **all** had the **ability** to speak in tongues!*

If it were true that someone can have the Holy Spirit anointing without the ability to display all of the gifts then pity the poor person that doesn't get the gift of faith, for the Bible clearly tells us in Hebrews 11:6 that “without faith it's impossible to please him” (referring to God)! **You simply can't pull apart the Holy Spirit. Remember, He is a whole spiritual entity (i.e. being). It would be like trying to divide Jesus into different sections. God forbid!**

Another common yet completely incorrect belief is that people automatically receive the Holy Spirit upon baptism in water, yet one look at Acts 8 quickly debunks this convenient theory. Clearly, anyone can (or at least should) discern that baptism in water and being baptized with the Holy Spirit are entirely separate experiences:

*Acts 8:5-17, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them...And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did...But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized, both men and women...**Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, **prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)** Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”*

[Note that this scripture does not repeat that the people received the Holy Spirit *and* spoke in tongues. Remember, it was a given by this stage that speaking in

tongues was the first manifesting sign of the Holy Spirit anointing. Even in people's repeated accounts of common occurrences today, every single detail is not always included. For example, if we say we got caught in the storm and the rain saturated our clothes causing us to shiver, the next time we got caught in a storm and told the story of our experience to the same people, we would likely simply say that we got caught in the storm (and the getting saturated and shivering parts would be omitted). Besides, Acts 8 does record that "when Simon the sorcerer saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:18-19). This is clear proof that Simon witnessed something *tangible* when the people were filled with the Holy Spirit. It's obvious he heard them speaking in tongues. Also remember that 1 Corinthians 14:22 states that "tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not..." ]

People will believe all kinds of things to get out of being fully obedient to God, to justify following after their "nice pastor" or their "happening church group," to fit with the pull of their own emotions, etc. This is how the vague concepts of "say the sinner's prayer" and "give your heart to Jesus" and "just accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior" have developed.

Imagine if some of the followers had departed from the group before the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost. The disciples had to wait for 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven to receive the Holy Spirit anointing, but what if some of them had left earlier? They had been gathering every day for prayer and worship and exhortation, so perhaps they felt "on fire" for Jesus even before day number ten. Anyone who had left (hypothetically, of course) prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit could indeed have come up with all kinds of convincing messages about salvation through Jesus Christ. This is no different to what happens today.

It often boils down to the fact that many people don't want to offend, and sometimes it boils down to the regard for money over truth. After all, if every leader of every church group around the world was to confront those in their congregation that hadn't *actually* been born again of water *and* of the Spirit...Well, we just can't see that happening. Can you? Church members would leave in droves. The coffers would quickly run dry. Pastors would lose their jobs.

The Bible tells us, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). Jesus even bluntly proclaimed, "Who is my mother, or my brethren?...whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mark 3:33-35). But, how many people (including church leaders) really take these scriptures seriously?

Even though reconciling with God is a straightforward (albeit profound) process, many people need a good dousing of scriptural reality before they can relax their minds toward the truth. They've been swamped by the plethora of messages touted by religious

organizations – and even all kinds of spiritualists – for centuries that either oversimplify or overcomplicate things. Tragically, mankind was very quick to start distorting the scriptures. Even the Bible records warnings by the apostles to beware of false doctrines, so lies began to be promulgated soon after the days of Jesus!

### **It's All Up to You**

At the end of the day, each one of us is personally accountable for our own choices. Scripture very pointedly warns us “**flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**” (**1 Corinthians 15:50**). So, without the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, it will be categorically impossible for you to be where Jesus is (in the spiritual realm you cannot see nor hear with your limited eyes and ears). It'd be like trying to walk through a brick wall. **The Holy Spirit is the power that changes us and makes it possible to transition from life on earth to everlasting life with God.**

The Bible tells us that “...ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). It also instructs us all to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). So, if you're honest with yourself and with God, and if you sincerely desire eternal life in the Kingdom, you will do what it takes to swim against the tide of popular belief and embrace that which is true and right:

*Matthew 7:13-14, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for **wide** is the gate, and **broad** is the way, that leadeth to **destruction**, and **many** there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and **narrow** is the way, which leadeth unto **life**, and **few** there be that find it.”*

### **Next Step**

Congratulations! You've put all of the puzzle pieces together and you can now see the full picture - with Jesus at the very center of it. In [Step #2](#) we discuss the specifics of how to get baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit. We also introduce the subject of, “What is your calling?”