

IS GOD FOOLISH?

D. Requirements for this Study

D1. Prerequisite: Holy Spirit

The Spirit of God has, in times past, filled certain individuals to perform works for Godⁱ beyond their own capabilities. Upon various people throughout history came the Spirit of God, who endowed them with prophecyⁱⁱ. However, the Spirit's influence was most often upon one person at a time, or at most a small groupⁱⁱⁱ of people. Therefore, when God fulfilled His word to the church^{iv}, a tremendous blessing was poured out as all believers received the Spirit of God. Recounted for us by Peter in Acts 2:16-18,

“this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That *I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh*; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

During the New Testament era, specifically the ‘times of the Gentiles’^v, the role of the Holy Spirit of God is distinctive towards the church: in that, He has sealed us

ⁱ EXO 31:2-5, "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³And *I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,* ⁴to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, ⁵in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship.

ⁱⁱ 1SAM 10:9-10, So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day. ¹⁰When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then *the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them;*

2CHR 24:20, *the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah* the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God: 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He also has forsaken you.'

ⁱⁱⁱ 1SAM 19:20, Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, *the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.*

^{iv} JOEL 2:27-29, you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God And there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame. ²⁸And *it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh*; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. ²⁹And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

^v LUKE 21:24, they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until *the times of the Gentiles* are fulfilled.

from the day we first believed until one particular moment. Paul mentions this moment of redemption in Ephesians 1:11-14,

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹²that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. ¹³In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, *you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*, ¹⁴*who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession*, to the praise of His glory.”

So it is now, the church is filled with the Spirit of God until our redemption, our purchase is made final^{vi}. Being filled, we are able to perform works for God beyond our capability, bringing glory to Him who blesses us. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to ascertain the truth of God’s word, especially to understand the truth revealed to us in Revelation.

So as we study Revelation, we must submit to the will of the Holy Spirit, who then moves our hearts and minds to seek only the truth of God, and not to add to it nor take away from it. While explaining to the disciples the pending arrival of the Holy Spirit, Jesus tells of the role of the Spirit in John 16:13-14,

“when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and *He will tell you things to come*. ¹⁴“He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

So, we should not be surprised that the Book of Revelation requires the Holy Spirit to explain to us the things to come. In addition, all Scripture being God-breathed will help us to understand these things more clearly, especially how they fit into God’s plan. We are privileged to benefit from the Holy Spirit in this way. For, as He leads us in all truth, He reveals to us knowledge of the kingdom of heaven, as Jesus explains when questioned in Matthew 13:10-17,

^{vi} REV 5:9-10, they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And *have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation*, ¹⁰And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

“the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" ¹¹He answered and said to them, "Because *it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, but to them it has not been given. ¹²"For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ¹³"Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴"And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; ¹⁵For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' ¹⁶"But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; ¹⁷"for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

As Jesus promised, so it is: the Holy Spirit, our helper, has opened the eyes of us, who believe, that we may see, opened our ears that we may hear, and opened our understanding that we may know the truth, and turn our hearts to Him.

Without the Spirit of God, those with closed eyes are influenced by the sinful nature within us all, and are prone to view God’s truth as foolishness^{vii}. However, the Holy Spirit is far from idle with those who have not accepted God’s way. We learn His role concerning such people in John 16:7-11,

“I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸"And when He has come, *He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:* ⁹"of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰"of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹"of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

Such people are far from God, and yet may still be considered wise in the world’s eyes. However, God would have them consider their thoughts from His point of view. Paul gives us such a perspective in 1 Corinthians 3:18-20,

^{vii} 1COR 1:27-29, *God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise*, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹that no flesh should glory in His presence.

“Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹For *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

Lacking the Holy Spirit, the world contends with God. For, they are just as we were before we knew the Lord, as Paul explains in 1Corinthians 2:14,

“the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Thus, spiritual discernment is a precious gift we receive from the Holy Spirit. We could never rightfully distinguish the word of Truth without Him or His gifts.

We must trust the Spirit of God, then, to guide us deeper into the truth. Else, we are apt to wander about the surface of the truth without ever digging in. For, should we be satisfied knowing only a little truth? No, instead we should earnestly seek to know God more by studying the truth^{viii} of His word. We must humble ourselves before the Lord, yielding to His Spirit to lead us into all truth^{ix}. In addition, we must rightfully respond to the truth we have, that we may be given more. Jesus teaches us in the parable of the minas that a little truth, or a little money in this case, is given to us to conduct business of the Master. We must not fail, then, to act diligently with the Master’s money, or truth, or any of His gifts. For when he returns, he will judge our works according to the amount of benefits we received from Him (represented in the parable by the minas). Thus, Jesus ends the parable with a warning echoed from Matthew 13:12^x, which we read in Luke 19:26,

“I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

^{viii} JOHN 17:17, Sanctify them by Your truth. *Your word is truth*.

^{ix} JOHN 16:13, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, *He will guide you into all truth*; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

^x MATH 13:12, *For whoever has, to him more will be given*, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

The responsibility is on us, then, to act in a manner worthy of our calling to bring glory^{xi} to the Lord, to utilize the gifts He has given us, and to respond correctly to the truth He has imparted to us.

As we grow in understanding of the Truth, the Holy Spirit leads us deeper in our relationship with God. Yet, if we fail to humble ourselves to the Spirit's lead, we are in danger of falling into a view of our own contrivance. Without the Spirit's guidance, we may easily develop an understanding that even conflicts with the rest of Scripture. A scary thought indeed, but how do we avoid drifting off the narrow way of truth? God has given us each other, a fellowship of believers, to keep us accountable one to another. Through the collection of differing gifts, with varying amounts in each of us, the Spirit has filled the church to be a more cohesive whole when we come together to study, to pray, and in every act we do on the Master's behalf, in the name of the Lord. Yielding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, operating under His influence, and utilizing the gifts He has bestowed upon us, are necessary for us to develop an understanding of God's truth that is consistent with all of Scripture. Thus, having the Holy Spirit within us is the first prerequisite for our study together in Revelation.

^{xi} 1THES 1:11-12, Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, ¹²that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.