

Cornelius Did Not Receive Holy Spirit Baptism

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INTRODUCTION

That Cornelius did *not* receive Holy Spirit baptism is concluded from those things uniquely related to that phenomenon which occurred on Pentecost in Acts, chapter two. Among those are the apostolic office itself, the relationship of the Comforter to the apostles, and Peter's account of the events in Caesarea. Holy Spirit baptism invested the apostles with authority over the church that was never given to any others and the authority of their office required verbal, plenary inspiration. That was the Holy Spirit's mission as the Revelator of all truth which was accomplished through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, promised and given only to the apostles.

THE APOSTOLIC OFFICE

The apostles of Jesus were His disciples, but not all of His disciples were apostles. Those twelve whom Jesus chose as apostles (Mt. 10:1-4)¹ and who companied with him while He was on earth—then later Matthias and Paul—occupied a unique office. While many of their qualifications as apostles were met by others, there was one thing which was unique to their office—Holy Spirit baptism. This was the crowning qualification of an apostle that fitted him for his office and was neither promised nor given to another in the first century.

As eyewitnesses of the Lord, Holy Spirit baptism endowed them with authority to speak for Him, and their word remains as though Jesus Himself were speaking today. Their authority was not limited to the term of their lives upon the earth. They were to be forever the teachers of the world and Christ's authoritative spokesmen—first through the word they preached, then the word others preached as apostolic hands were laid upon them in the impartation of spiritual gifts, and finally through the canon of inspired writings collected into the New Testament. It was necessary, therefore, that they spoke infallibly, with divinely given credentials to authenticate their authority. When He gave His apostles a limited commission to preach to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 10:5-6) Jesus looked beyond that present time and spoke of their post-Pentecost work, saying,

And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you (Mt. 10: 19-20).

Mark records the same promise in connection with the publication of the gospel throughout the world prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost (Mk. 13:10-11).

In both accounts, Jesus promised verbal, plenary inspiration to the apostles which was necessary for them to infallibly deliver "all truth" to the world. Through Holy Spirit baptism, they were designated as human repositories of all that Jesus taught and their very words would be those supplied by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they were forbidden to even "premeditate" when replying to their accusers, but to speak that which would be given them "in that hour." That is the exact meaning of Luke's account of Peter's answer to the Sanhedrin when he was questioned by them concerning the healing of the lame man at the temple (Acts 3:1-10).

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, even by him

doth this man stand here before you whole (Acts 4:8-10).

The apostle Peter had no need to “premeditate,” nor to take “thought beforehand” what his reply would be. The phrase, “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost...” indicated his verbal and plenary inspiration in that moment and that power came through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Neither the promise, nor the performance of verbal, plenary inspiration was given to Cornelius or any others than the apostles of Jesus Christ.

On another occasion, Jesus metaphorically referred to their apostolic authority in the new dispensation as “judges” over spiritual Israel—the church:

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28).

Their words would be the standard by which the people of God—called figuratively, “the twelve tribes of Israel”—would be ordered until Christ delivers the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Hence their authority in the church would extend throughout the gospel dispensation—“in the regeneration”—by the inspired word of God which they received through Holy Spirit baptism and delivered in the first century. That word is unchanged and unchangeable and through it the apostles of Christ wield authority today as judges of the church which is called “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) and “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” in the salutation of James’ epistle (Jas. 1:1). Cornelius was not one of those to whom this was promised. Neither does he sit on a throne of judgment in the church today.

The apostles as “ambassadors,” “earthen vessels” and “witnesses”

Like many New Testament words, there is no special religious significance inherent in the word “apostle.” It is a combination of two Greek words—*apo* which means “away (from something near)”² and *stello*, meaning “remove one’s self, withdraw one’s self, to depart.”³ Rendered into English, the word *apostle* means “one sent,” i.e., one sent on a particular mission with authority and credentials to perform that for which he is sent. An apostle of Christ was one sent by Him for a particular purpose and endowed with authority to accomplish that purpose. Consequently, there are three terms uniquely applied to the apostles in the New Testament which are descriptive of their authority to speak for Christ as those sent by Him. Those words are, “ambassadors,” “earthen vessels,” and “witnesses.”

The word, “ambassador,” is used by Paul to describe apostolic authority to speak for Christ. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). An *ambassador* is one endowed by a sovereign power to speak in that power’s behalf with the ambassador’s words having the same authority as if the sovereign head of state himself were speaking. When Peter spoke by that authority on Pentecost, he exercised his ambassadorial office and his speech was as though Christ Himself personally spoke from the throne of David to that assembled multitude. The words Peter spoke were those of Christ which Peter received through Holy Spirit baptism as Christ’s apostolic ambassador. Cornelius was not endued with ambassadorial authority from Christ.

Paul also used another term exclusively describing the apostolic office—“earthen vessels.” In defense of his own apostleship, and the gospel he preached, in Second Corinthians, chapters three and four, Paul wrote, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:7). It has been often claimed that, since gospel preaching has been committed to human agency, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels” today. But Paul’s declaration in the above passage applies to no man living today. The “treasure” of which he wrote was called “the glorious gospel of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4) which “God...hath shined in our hearts...” (2 Cor. 4:6) and that was the gospel in the Holy Spirit inspired apostles. Today, we have this treasure in the inspired Book. Then, it was in

inspired men, styled “earthen vessels” who were the apostles of Jesus Christ in and through whom was revealed “all truth.” No man, before or since the apostles, could rightfully claim to be an “earthen vessel” containing the gospel. That term belongs exclusively to the apostles of Christ in whom the gospel resided through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Neither Cornelius nor members of his household were “earthen vessels” in whom resided the gospel by inspiration.

The word “witnesses” is also an exclusive reference to the apostles who were the Lord’s constant companions for the approximately three years of His personal ministry, beginning with His baptism and ending with His ascension. That was explained by Peter in his speech concerning the selection of an apostle to replace the fallen Judas.”

Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection (Acts 1:21-22).

The word “witness” is from *martus* and is defined as “one who avers, or can aver, what he himself has seen or heard...”⁴ The witnesses of Christ were the apostles and Peter defines such a witness as one who had been with Christ from His baptism to His ascension. Neither Cornelius nor members of his household were qualified to be witnesses of Christ.

Jesus’ Last Words To His Apostles

The 13th through the 16th chapters of John constitute Jesus’ last discourse to His apostles on the night He was betrayed. He fully understood the ordeal that lay ahead for Himself—that He would soon be taken away from them and crucified. He also knew this would not be His end, but the apostles understood none of those momentous events that would shortly occur. Consequently, Jesus sought to allay their misapprehensions and fears and give them hope in the face of the dark ordeal looming on the immediate horizon. His death would culminate three years of His personal direction and teaching of these men who were to be His spokesmen in the new dispensation and he gently broke the news to them of His immediate departure.

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say unto you...Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards (Jn. 13:33, 36).

It was in this last discourse to them that Jesus promised them “another Comforter” (Jn. 14:6). In connection with this promise, He said, “I will not leave you comfortless” (Jn. 14:8). His language here is, literally, “I will not leave you *orphans*.” The word translated “comfortless” is *orphanos* in the original and means, “*bereft* (of a father, of parents; of those bereft of a teacher, guide, guardian.”⁵ As one bereft of parents is an orphan without benefit of authoritative parental guidance, sustenance or aid for living and functioning normally, so it seemed that the apostles would be so bereft after Christ’s departure. But Jesus assured them that this would not be the case. As He had been their guide, protector, sustainer and spiritual guardian while He was with them in His personal ministry, so He promised them “another Comforter” Who would do for them after His departure what He had done while He was with them. This “Comforter,” He identified as the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26) Who would do for them in Christ’s absence what He had done for the previous three years—and would have done had He remained with them. The work of the Comforter in their lives was simply an extension of Christ’s work. Having promised them “another Comforter,” Jesus then explained His work. “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” (Jn. 14:26).

The “all things” of this verse refers to the scheme of redemption, the revelation of which Jesus

began and would complete through them. Paul so used that phrase in First Corinthians, referring to the revelation of the gospel plan of salvation through the plenary and verbal inspiration of himself and the other apostles.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

The full, complete, and final revelation of God to man was made through the apostles of Jesus Christ. That plan, which in ages past was not known, is now revealed through them. They were given not only every Truth necessary to man's salvation, but the very words in which to express that Truth, as Paul noted above and as Jesus had predicted in Matthew 10:19-20.

Jesus *began* to teach that plan of redemption while He was with the apostles, but did not complete its full revelation in those three short years. "These things," He said, "have I yet spoken unto you, being present with you" (Jn. 14:25) and Luke noted that his own gospel account only covered those things that Jesus "*began* both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). Jesus did not reveal all Truth while He was on earth, but said that work would be completed by the promised Comforter.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (Jn. 16:12-14).

As God is the Great Architect of the gospel scheme of redemption, and Christ is its procuring cause through His blood, so the Holy Spirit is the Revelator of it, in and through the apostles. That singular mission of the Holy Spirit was accomplished in the two-fold function of infallibly reminding the apostles of every word Jesus spoke on earth, and further revealing truth Jesus had not previously spoken.

The Lord did not teach His apostles 'all things' or 'all truth' while he was with them...It was therefore reserved for the *Comforter*, the Holy Spirit of inspiration, to reveal to the apostles the things the Lord had not Himself told them, and thus complete the gospel plan of redemption. It is apparent, therefore, that the promise of the *Comforter* was made to the apostles alone.⁶

THE COMFORTER AND THE APOSTLES

The relationship between the Comforter and the apostles is unique. No others in the first century sustained such a relationship and to no others was the Comforter promised. The term *Comforter* in John 14-16 refers only to the Holy Spirit in His relationship to the apostles in the four times it occurs in this context. It never refers to the Holy Spirit's relationship to mankind in general, and it is an abuse and misuse of the Scriptures to refer to the Holy Spirit as anyone's "Comforter" today.

This Comforter was the *Paracletos* for which term there is no English correspondent. It might have been anglicized, or 'englishized,' to read *Paraclete*, which still would be the promise of something to the apostles alone which would fill the place of Jesus with them. Because Jesus said, in the text of John 14:16-26, 'I will not leave you comfortless,'

the noun *Comforter* was applied to this promise as the name for it. But we are not left to surmise what it designates: 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter...even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive.' The *Comforter* therefore was the measure of the Holy Spirit possessed by the apostles for the revelation of the truth—"the Spirit of truth," or complete inspiration, and was promised only to the apostles of Christ.

The phrase 'whom the world cannot receive' does not refer to the alien sinner not receiving a direct operation of the Holy Spirit....The term *world* here has reference to men in general as opposite to the *apostles* of Christ, and it means that this promise was *special* and not *general*; it was a promise to the apostles alone, and to no one else.⁷

The word from which "Comforter" is translated is *paracletos*—a Greek word which has no single English equivalent. Z. T. Sweeney wrote,

There is no word within my knowledge that will fully express in English the Greek word. It is much better to Anglicize the word into the English 'Paraclete.' The word is used of the Holy Spirit only four times in the New Testament, and only used by the Saviour in His private address to the 12, found in the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of John. It is never applied to the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to mankind in general. It is promised only to the chosen, and Jesus tells them that *the world* cannot receive 'him.' This Paraclete is a distinct gift to the 12, to take the place of the personal presence and guidance of the Leader who is preparing to leave them...By examining the lexicons we find that the Paraclete is

1. One called or sent to assist another.
2. One who pleads the cause of another.
3. A monitor.
4. An instructor.
5. A guide.
6. A helper.
7. A supporter.
8. A comforter.⁸

Since the word 'Comforter' is used for the Holy Spirit in John 14, 15, and 16, a study of the use of this word in these chapters should help to clear up the meaning. The Holy Spirit is called a Comforter four times in these four chapters...'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever" (Jn. 14:16). Note carefully the word 'another.' The word "**allos—another**" indicates the significance of the word 'Comforter' in this verse. 'Christ was to His disciples, by implication of His word, 'another' (**allos**—another of the same sort, not **heteros**—different.' (W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). Christ promised the apostles that the Comforter would take His place with them. A consideration of the relationship of Christ to the apostles should help one see that the promise of the Comforter in John 14:16 must be limited to the apostles...this promise of the Holy Spirit was given only to the apostles. Surely anyone ought to be able to see that the relationship of the Holy Spirit in this verse was peculiar to the apostles, as was their selection and personal training by Christ while He was on earth...These promises were special promises made to the apostles who had a special work, and these special promises were to qualify the apostles for this special work.⁹

HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM AND THE COMFORTER

The baptism of the Holy Spirit and the descent of the Comforter are inseparably linked. To speak of one is to speak of the other.

It must be further postulated that this *Comforter* was synonymous with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which also was a promise to the apostles only. Properly defined, the Holy Spirit baptism was *the clothing with power* which came to the apostles on Pentecost. In the promise of Luke 24:49 the Lord said they should be 'endued with power from on high,' otherwise translated, 'clothed with power'; and in Acts 2:4 on the day of Pentecost the waiting apostles 'were all filled with the Holy Spirit.' It was not the manner of the Holy Spirit's descent from heaven that constituted the baptism of the Spirit, but their being *filled or overwhelmed, or endued and clothed*—it was the result, not the manner of descent, that defines Holy Spirit baptism, which the apostles only received. If any power of the Holy Spirit was lacking, it could not have been the *overwhelming*, or the baptism, and it is therefore a mistake to assume that others than the apostles, who received certain measures or were subjects of certain manifestations of the Spirit were thereby recipients of the Holy Spirit baptism.¹⁰

Holy Spirit baptism in John's statement

John the Baptizer's promise of Holy Spirit baptism and the baptism of fire is a general thesis statement made to the mixed multitude from "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan" (Mt. 3:5) who came to hear him. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Mat. 3:11). Many of those in John's audience had received his message and been baptized. Others had not. The baptism of fire of which he spoke was not for every person in that audience any more than the baptism of the Holy Spirit. *Some* of his auditors would experience a baptism of fire—specifically the Pharisees and Sadducees who rejected and crucified Christ. Others in the audience would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but John's statement did not specifically identify those who would be baptized "with the Holy Ghost." It remained for Christ to narrow John's thesis statement and identify the persons who would receive Holy Spirit baptism. This He did in his last appearance to them before His ascension.

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 (Acts 1:4-5).

The apostles, then, were to be the recipients of Holy Spirit baptism. The "them" in Acts 1:4, with whom Jesus was assembled, were the "apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts 1:2) and "to whom he also showed himself alive after his passion" (Acts 1:3). The meaning of Jesus' statement in Acts 1:4-5 is the same as that in Luke's account when He said, "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" (Lk. 24:49). These statements are parallel and explain each other. In Luke 24, He said "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem." In Acts 1, He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem." In Luke 24, He said, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you." In Acts 1, He said, "wait for the promise of the Father... For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost..." In Luke 24, He said they would be "endued with power and in Acts 1 He said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

The "promise of the Father" was the descent of the Comforter which Jesus called, "the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father" (Jn. 15:26). All of Jesus' statements regarding the Comforter, the "promise of the Father," and Holy Spirit baptism described a single event resulting in the apostolic reception of power on Pentecost and were promised only to the apostles. Neither Cornelius, nor members of his household received such promises because neither he nor they were apostles of Jesus Christ. The crowning qualification of an apostle was the baptism of the Holy Spirit—their clothing with power in order to recall to their minds all

Jesus had taught them and to further guide them into all truth.

Luke, in referring to the coming of the Spirit upon the apostles, uses the phrase, 'be endued with power from on high.' A better translation of the word 'endued' is 'clothed.' This word points to the authority of the apostles. It is equal to Matthew's phrase, 'lo, I am with you,' signifying the inspiration of the apostles. The apostles would receive their revelation of the gospel through their being clothed with power from on high. The power and the authority of the apostles (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10) places the apostles in the same relationship to the church in the period when revelation was being given directly, as the written Word is our authority today. The Word was in the apostles by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and was the authority during this period. The apostles exercise that same authority through the written Word today.¹¹

Had Cornelius received Holy Spirit baptism, he would have been qualified in every respect as an apostle of Jesus Christ and would have had no need to send for Peter to tell him words whereby he could be saved. He would have possessed those very words by virtue of Holy Spirit baptism as did the apostles, and his word would have been as authoritative as theirs.

This promise qualified the apostles to write the New Testament. Since it enabled the apostles to write a New Testament, it must follow that if one has the Comforter as promised in these verses, he could do the same thing that the apostles did; that is, write a New Testament. If not, why not?¹²

THE EVENTS IN CAESAREA

The events at Cornelius' house in Caesarea had a single purpose—to convince Peter and the Jews who accompanied him that salvation in Christ through the gospel was for the Gentile world as well as the Jews. That it was God's intent to save the Gentiles through the gospel was difficult to grasp by the Jews, and by Peter himself. That is evident from the events on the housetop in Joppa where Peter prayed while emissaries from Cornelius journeyed there to bring him to Cornelius (Acts 10:9-18). The vision Peter saw while in a trance carried the message that Gentiles were not to be considered "unclean," but were to be received into Christ as were the Jews. Peter had preached that very thing on Pentecost when he told his auditors that, "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" (Acts 2:39). That was God's promise of spiritual gifts not only to the Jews and their offspring, but to the Gentiles ("all that are afar off") as well. Yet, Peter did not fully understand that concept until the vision and subsequent events led him to Cornelius' house.

Upon Peter's arrival at Caesarea, the centurion fell down before him "But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:26). He then reminded Cornelius that as a Jew it was unlawful for him to keep company with Gentiles, "but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). Having said that, Peter then asked Cornelius why he had called for him, and Cornelius related how he had seen an angel while he was praying and the angel instructed him to send for Peter who would speak to him and his house.

Luke records that Peter then began preaching to Cornelius and the assembled group, giving Peter's words in Acts 10:34-43. Then, we have this account:

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 (Acts 10:44-46).

Peter's report of the events in Jerusalem

It is important at this point to note that the events recorded in Acts 10 are not in the order of their occurrence. That information is given by Peter in the next chapter. Acts 10 simply states *what* occurred. The *when* and *how* of those things is related by Peter in Acts 11 after he was accused of eating with men who were uncircumcised (Acts 11:2-3). "But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them" (Acts 11:4). Peter's report of the events to the brethren in Jerusalem was made "from the beginning" and "by order unto them."

When Cornelius' prayers and alms came up before God as a memorial (Acts 10:4) he was a believer in God, but not in Jesus Christ. Now, note when the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his household. Peter says it was, "As I began to speak" (Acts 11:15). If Cornelius received Holy Spirit baptism, it was before Peter spoke but few words and before Cornelius was a believer in Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, if the miracle at the house of Cornelius was the Holy Spirit baptism, since it is stated that the Spirit "fell on them"—the whole house of Cornelius, and upon all that were in his house on the occasion of Peter's address—it follows that they were all recipients of what the apostles received on Pentecost. Yet this miracle occurred before any of them had heard and believed the gospel, for in verse 15 Peter himself declares that the Spirit fell on them *as he began to speak*; but in Acts 15:7 Peter said they believed after having heard the word by his mouth. So if what happened at the house of Cornelius was Holy Spirit baptism, then this house full of unbelievers were all baptized in the Holy Spirit. That is what all of the 'Holy Ghost baptism' cults claim, and have contended for in debate on the Holy Spirit, but we have not allowed them to get by with their false doctrine ; it is out of harmony with the New Testament teaching on the workings of the Holy Spirit and the one purpose of Holy Spirit baptism.¹³

Peter then continued his report of the events in the order in which they occurred.

...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? (Acts 11:15-17).

The miraculous events in Caesarea *reminded* Peter of the events of Pentecost. He "remembered the word of the Lord." Peter was *reminded* of Jesus' statement that the apostles would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and *remembered* the events of Pentecost when Cornelius and his household received the miraculous gift of tongues directly from heaven. Now, notice carefully: "One thing can remind you of *another* thing, without being the *same* thing."¹⁴ Water flowing from a hydrant may *remind* one of Niagara Falls, but the two are *not* the *same* thing. What happened at Cornelius' house recalled the events of Pentecost to Peter's mind, but he did *not* say they were the *same* thing.

Two places, chapter 10:45 and 11:17, refer to this outpouring as a 'gift' and not as the baptism, and it is nowhere directly called the baptism. When Peter declared that he remembered the word of the Lord, 'Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit,' it was the promise made to the apostles which, according to Acts 1:5, was to be fulfilled—"not many days hence"—on the day of Pentecost. The statement of Peter in Acts 11:15, 'as upon us at the beginning' is indicative of *manner* and not the *measure* of the reception—the passage says as a comparison, 'the like gift'—like it in the manner by which the incident occurred, descending directly from heaven, which reminded Peter—he 'remembered' the Pentecost occasion. Cornelius did not receive what the apostles had received ; he did not know what the apostles knew; he could not do what the apostles did ; and he was therefore not *endued* nor *clothed* with the power which the Holy Spirit

baptism bestowed.¹⁵

“The like gift”

When Peter defended his preaching to the Gentiles, he referred to the Spirit falling on Cornelius' household as, “the like gift” (Acts 11:17). While we will not go into the details of the proposition, let it suffice us to here say that the word “gift” when used with regard to the Holy Spirit refers to miraculous endowments distributed by the Holy Spirit in the first century church. There are six verses in the New Testament in which the word “gift” is used. They are Acts 2:38 (“the gift of the Holy Spirit”) Acts 8:20 (“the gift of God”) Acts 10:45 (“the gift of the Holy Spirit”) Acts 11:17 (“the like gift”) Ephesians 3:7 (“the gift of the grace of God”) and Ephesians 4:7 (“the measure of the gift of Christ”). Each of these passages refers to miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. From a study of Philip's work in Samaria in Acts 8, it is concluded that the only way these gifts were distributed in the first century church was by the imposition of apostolic hands.

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” (Acts 8:14-17).

From Pentecost until Peter preached to Cornelius and his house, the distribution of spiritual gifts was precisely as described in the above passage, and from that event in Caesarea onward, it *remained* the only way such gifts were distributed (Acts 19:6; Rom. 1:11). This was what Paul called, “the signs of an apostle” which he wrought at Corinth (2 Cor. 12:12). Philip could work miracles (Acts 8:6-7) but he could not perform “the signs of an apostle.” Spiritual gifts that were granted to the Samaritans had to come through the laying on of apostolic hands. That's the reason Peter and John were dispatched to Samaria after the apostles at Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had received the word of God. Notice also that the reason they “prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost” was because, “as yet he was fallen on none of them.” Both Luke and Peter used the same terminology to describe the gift of tongues Cornelius received directly from heaven. Of the Samaritans, Luke said, “he was fallen on none of them” (Acts 8:16). When he recorded the events at Cornelius' house, he wrote, “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word” (Acts 8:44) Then Peter used the same language concerning the events in Caesarea. “And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15).

The phrase describing the Holy Spirit “falling” on the apostles and Cornelius is a “synecdoche.” That word describes the practice of using the whole for the part. When Luke wrote of Cornelius' house that, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word,” and of the Samaritans that, “as yet he was fallen upon none of them,” he used the phrase of the Holy Spirit “falling” to indicate miraculous gifts—in Cornelius' case the gift of tongues.

When the Holy Spirit “fell” on the apostles on Pentecost that was an event that had never before occurred in history and never occurred again—their baptism in the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit “fell” on the house of Cornelius in Caesarea, that was also an event that had never occurred before and never again occurred—the granting of miraculous power directly from heaven, rather than through the imposition of an apostle's hands. In that way—and in that way only—was this a “like gift.”

Some are content to stake their whole case for Cornelius' household receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit on the *like* gift argument of Acts 11:17. The argument is that the word *like* is an adjective that modifies the noun *gift*. There can be no doubt that this word is an adjective, but an adjective can be used as an adverb (Robertson, 1934, p. 659). Those making this argument usually equate the word *like* to the word *equal*...The problem is when the word *equal* is interpreted to mean the same thing as the word *identity*.

Merriam Webster defines *identity* as ‘**1 a**: sameness of essential or generic character in different instances **b**: sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing...’ (P. 575). To illustrate the point that is missed by some, note the following: ‘two nickels are equal to one dime,’ but, ‘two nickels are not the same as one dime.’ The coins are only equal in monetary value, but are different in many other respects. The likeness of the gift was in two respects (they were both imparted directly, without the laying-on-of-hands of an apostle, and they spoke in tongues).¹⁶

Cornelius did not receive what the apostles received—Holy Spirit baptism. What he received was the gift of tongues. The baptism of the Holy Spirit endued the apostles with power, as Jesus had promised only them (Lk. 24:49). This enabled them to be His infallible witnesses, to recall every word He had spoken to them while He lived among them, to guide them into further Truth (Jn. 14:26; 16:13) and to be His “ambassadors” in the kingdom, and “earthen vessels” in whom all truth resided. None of this describes Cornelius.

The events at Cornelius’ house were also unique. It was the first and last time that miraculous power was granted directly from heaven to one other than an apostle, and its sole purpose was to signify to the Jews who accompanied Peter—and those to whom they reported those events—that the Gentiles were to be accepted in Christ’s kingdom as well as the Jews. There was only one other time that Peter could recall which resembled the Spirit falling upon Cornelius, and that was “on us at the beginning.” As divine approval of the apostles was signaled to the assembled multitude on Pentecost by the “sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2:2) so divine approval of the Gentiles’ inclusion in the new covenant was signaled to the Jews at Cornelius’ house when the Spirit fell on them, “For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God” (Acts 10:46).

This case of the outpouring of the Spirit was clearly an outward miraculous manifestation to demonstrate, in a method similar to Pentecost, that the Gentiles were acceptable to God as gospel subjects and should be so received by all the Jews in the church everywhere, for it was nowhere else repeated. If, then, it should be asked in what way the outpouring of the Spirit at the house of Cornelius differed from other special gifts of the Spirit, referred to in the New Testament as ‘spiritual gifts,’ it was in the fact that it was not imparted by the laying on of hands by the apostles; that it was not a source of knowledge to impart instruction, teaching or edification and it did not continue with Cornelius and the hearers who were there. The respect in which it was unlike the gifts of the Spirit received by the spiritually endowed teachers is the precise respect in which it was *like* what occurred on Pentecost—in the *manner* of its reception only, in that it was not imparted but came direct from heaven as on Pentecost.¹⁷

Conclusion

Cornelius did not receive Holy Spirit baptism because he was not an apostle. Jesus chose His apostles, taught them for three years, then sent the Comforter to guide them into all truth. One could not receive Holy Spirit baptism who was not an apostle, for that was the very thing which empowered them to *be* apostles and the ambassadors of Christ, to recall all Jesus had taught them while he was on earth and to know further Truth which the Holy Spirit revealed.

The descent of the Comforter was synonymous with Holy Spirit baptism and promised only to the apostles of Jesus Christ. Holy Spirit baptism empowered the apostles to infallibly recall everything which Jesus taught while He was on earth. That ability was demonstrated in Paul’s words to the Ephesian elders when he said, “... remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). This statement, which Paul attributed to Jesus, is nowhere else recorded in the New Testament. Neither Matthew, Mark, Luke, nor John recorded it in their gospel accounts. How then did Paul know Jesus said those words? As an apostle, Paul was a recipient of Holy Spirit baptism—the Comforter Who brought “all things” to Paul’s “remembrance” that Jesus had said (Jn. 14:26).

The Comforter also guided the apostles “into all truth” (Jn. 16:13). That too is seen in the writings of the great apostle to the Gentiles. When Paul dealt with marriage questions from the church at Corinth and wrote, “but to the rest speak I, not the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:12) he was neither giving his own opinion, nor contradicting anything Jesus said. His words simply affirmed what Jesus promised the apostles in John 16:13—that they would be guided into further truth which they were not able to bear at that time. The Holy Spirit revealed additional Truth through the inspired Paul that Jesus had not taught in His personal ministry. Moreover, Paul affirmed as much when he concluded that, “I think also that I have the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 7:40). That was inspiration through Holy Spirit baptism, and Cornelius did not possess that.

Peter said the Holy Spirit fell on them all, “as I began to speak” (Acts 11:15) but he went ahead and preached to them and “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). The angel which appeared to Cornelius told him to send for Peter “who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14). Now if Cornelius and his house received Holy Spirit baptism *before* Peter preached to them (and they did) and *before* he commanded them to be baptized (and they did), then there was no need for Peter to waste his breath. Holy Spirit baptism would have infallibly recalled every word of Jesus to Cornelius’ mind, including Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38.

On the point of receiving the apostolic powers and credentials, Paul declared in Second Corinthians 11:5 that he was ‘not a whit behind the very chiefest apostle.’ There was no such thing as measures of Holy Spirit baptism, or of a limited Spirit baptism. If Cornelius had been baptized in the Holy Spirit he would have possessed all powers imparted by it and belonging to it, and he would not have been inferior to the apostles of Christ in any respect; he would have known all that the apostles knew, and could have done all that the apostles did, and it would not have been necessary for Peter to have told him anything.¹⁸

Cornelius did not receive Holy Spirit baptism.

THE TWO-FOLD WAY THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALED ALL TRUTH

REMINDING (JOHN 14:26)

REVEALING (JOHN 6:13)

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HOLY SPIRIT
BAPTISM

THE APOSTLES
ACTS 2:1-4

SPOKE BY
INSPIRATION

ALL TRUTH
REVEALED

THE BIBLE