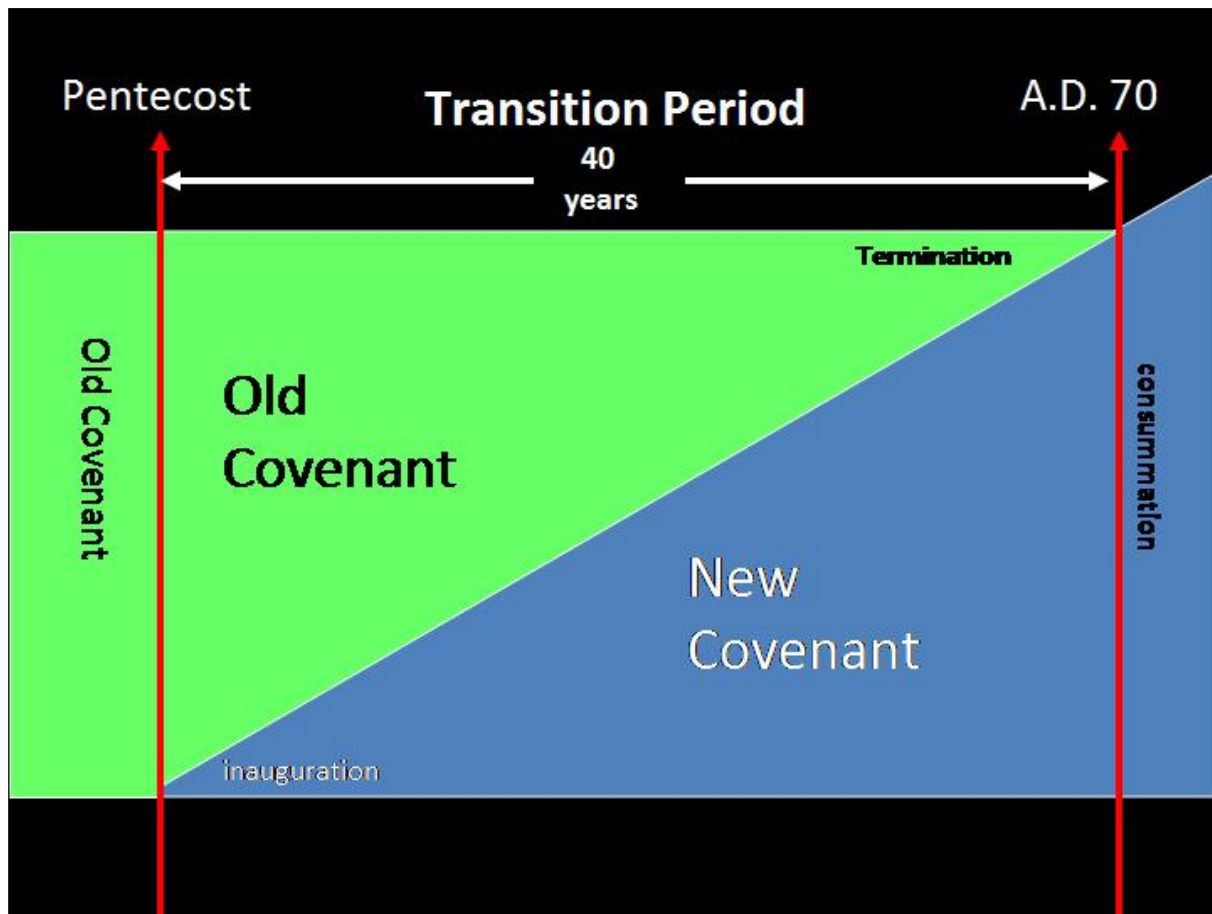


# Salvation of the Remnant

[Acts 19:1-7](#)



The Book of Acts shows us the transition from Judaism to Jesus. If we are going to correctly understand the New Testament, we must understand "the transition period." If someone were to ask you what the transition period was, could you explain it? When did it begin? When did it end? What was happening during it? These are questions that we need to be able to answer if we are going to understand the transition period.



The transition period began on Pentecost in A.D. 30, and it ended at the [destruction of the Jewish temple](#) in A.D. 70. During the transition period the church was growing from infancy to maturity. A spiritual house was being built for God to dwell in. This was a time of change and growth. It was a time of transformation from the Old to the New.

The book of Acts shows us the transition for the Jews of the early church. The old things of Judaism, the old covenant, faded out very slowly, and the new covenant gradually phased in. The Book of Acts is not a book upon which we can base a systematic theology. In other words, you can't go to the Book of Acts and just take these things and frame them as a normal theology. That's why people get into problems when they build their doctrine on the Book of Acts.

Ray Steadman writes, *"We are studying the section of the book of Acts which sets before us the account of the early church in operation and which outlines for us the pattern of normal Christianity. We must remember that this book is intended to describe Christianity as it ought to be in every age."*

Is what we see in the book of Acts normal Christianity? How many of you have seen someone drop dead in church for lying? How many of you have seen someone blinded for interfering with the Gospel message. How many of you have seen the lame healed so that they immediately leap and dance? How many of you have seen the dead raised to life? Okay, I guess you get my point.

Why is it that these things happened in Acts but not for us today? How are we different from those who lived in Acts? Those first century saints lived in the “Transition Period” and we do not. In the Transition Period, from Pentecost to the Second Coming in A.D. 70, God worked in the church through miraculous gifts and spoke to His prophets.

When Christianity was established and a new covenant was introduced, there were many Jews who found it very difficult to make all of the transition very rapidly. And so there were people in the midst of transition, coming to Jesus Christ from Judaism and caught somewhere in the transition. We saw one such person last week in Apollos. The story of Apollos is about twenty years after Pentecost and he was still not a Christians until Percilla and Aquilla took him aside and explained to him the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Today in our study we see another group of people stuck in the past, living as if Pentecost had never happened.

We saw in our studies last week that Paul ended his second missionary journey and began his third. On his third missionary journey he went through South Galatia and confirmed the Churches and strengthened them. From there he comes to Ephesus. We saw last week that Apollos had already left Ephesus for Achaia.

***And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace; (Acts 18:27 NASB)***

Here we see that Apollos left Ephesus and went to Corinth, which is in Achaia.

***And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples, (Acts 19:1 NASB)***

Although for the most part the chapter divisions are helpful, sometime they are confusing. Many come at the wrong place. This certainly is one, for this story continues into the opening section of Chapter 19 and the chapter division is a break that does not belong.

Luke picks up Paul's itinerary with the note that the apostle takes a hilly, higher-elevation route west to Ephesus. This was more direct than the regular trade route down the Lycus and Maenander valleys.



Ephesus, like Athens, had reached its heyday and was in decline when Paul visited it. Its claim to fame was twofold. Its location on the west coast of Asia Minor near the mouth of the Cayster River made it an important commercial center. As commerce declined due to the silting up of the port at Ephesus, its religious influence continued to draw worshipers to the Temple of Artemis (Greek) or Diana (Roman). This magnificent temple was four times the size of the Parthenon at Athens and was renowned as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Alexander the Great had contributed much money for its construction in the fourth century B.C., and it lasted until A.D. 263 when the Goths destroyed it.

When he came into Ephesus Paul no doubt hooked up with the Jewish community and Luke says that he,

“found some disciples.” Paul asked these disciples a strange question:

***and he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." (Acts 19:2 NASB)***

Now in verse 1 they are called “disciples” and in verse 2 it says that they “believed”. So many have assumed that these men are Christians. But as we will see they do not have the Holy Spirit and they therefore cannot be Christians:

***However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (Romans 8:9 NASB)***

As we will see what these men believed was the message of John the Baptist:

***Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:1-2 NASB)***

John's message was that the kingdom of heaven was at hand and Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of God:

***Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:35-36 NASB)***

So John's message was to believe on Jesus who was to come. These men were looking forward to the coming of Christ.

What about the fact that they are called "***disciples***"? In the Book of Acts, the term "disciple" almost always refers to believers (6:1, 2, 7; 9:10, 19, 25-26, 36, 38; 11:26, 29; 13:52; 14:20-22, 28; 15:10; 16:1; 18:23, 27), but not always.

Elsewhere Luke used the word "***disciple***" to describe John's followers:

***And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers; the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same; but Yours eat and drink." (Luke 5:33 NASB)***

We see here that John had disciples, the Pharisees had disciples and many Rabbis had disciples. A disciple is simply a learner. He can be a disciple of anybody. Clearly these men were disciples of John the Baptist, not Jesus. They had not heard of Jesus' death and resurrection, nor had they heard about the giving of the Holy Spirit to believers.

When Paul met these men he sensed that something was missing. Apparently, there was something about these disciples that prompted the question from Paul:

***and he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." (Acts 19:2 NASB)***

Now that question, "***Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?***"—has become the favorite question of a modern movement in Christianity called Pentecostalism. They have posed this question as the question to ask Christians. "Have you received the Holy Spirit 'since' you believed?" The view that they take is that you can be a Christian and not possess the Holy Spirit. And at some point after your salvation you then, by a certain activity, receive the Holy Spirit.

These verses in Acts are not teaching the doctrine of a second blessing. There are people and have been people, and still are some, who feel that the Christian life is lived in the following way:

1. We hear the Gospel of the Lord Jesus
2. We believe in the Gospel that Christ died for our sins
3. When we believe that Christ died for our sins we have the forgiveness of our sins.
4. But, the reception of the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace; and the reception of the Holy Spirit follows our conversion—sometimes, by a lengthy period of time, sometimes by a relatively short period of time—but the reception of the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace, usually brought about by further dedication to the Lord God.

Too much contemporary teaching on this topic seems to imply (if not to state directly) that a Christian may reach a place or a state where the struggles of life disappear altogether. Such a teaching is both false and unbiblical. It is also dangerous, because by promising what it can never deliver, it sets up Christians for failure and immense discouragement when they cannot achieve the promised "victory" over sin.

Now this view is held by many Pentecostals. And so they would make a distinction between possessing the Holy Spirit and possessing the fullness of the Spirit or the Baptism of the Spirit.

Now this is a major, major passage for those who would defend a gap between salvation and the Holy Spirit i.e. the second

blessing. But as I said earlier you cannot take the experience of the people in Acts and make it the norm for the church.

David Duplesses who is a spokesman for Pentecostalism said this and I quote him. *"At the turn of the century, there was no Pentecostal movement. Today it consists of a community of more than 10 million souls that can be found in every country under the sun."*

Duplesses went on to say this, *"What happened during the years from Acts to 1900 was that the church lost its faith and hence lost the miracle gifts and lost the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit."* He also said, *"The Holy Spirit continued in control until the close of the first century. When he was largely rejected in his position as leader of the church usurped by man."* God lost control? Now that is the comment of one who is in the movement. It seems a very strange theology to assume that the Holy Spirit can only control the church until the end of the first century, then he lost control and man took it over for 1800 years.

If you carefully read the Bible and can clearly see that God is in control of everything, including man. In addition to that, these folks would tell us that the movement as we know it today is then patterned after the Book of Acts. And what everybody needs to do is get back to the Book of Acts and that the Book of Acts becomes normative for Christian behavior.

They say that the fact that you could be saved and get the Holy Spirit later is based on the Book of Acts. But as I said, if you make the Book of Acts the norm, then you have tremendous problems. You're going to have to allow for revelation current today. You're going to have to allow for Apostles today. You're going to have to allow for all of the signs and wonders and miracles that accompanied the early church and the various manifestations.

One of the problems here is a bad translation. The KJV states,

*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. (Acts 19:2 KJV)*

The correct translation is *"when you believed"* rather than *"since you believed."* *"Since you believed"* sounds like the Holy Spirit came sometime after salvation. But the Greek text implies no second work of grace.

So Paul asks these men *"Did you receive the Spirit when you believed?"* and they respond, *"No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."* Now, they don't mean that they don't have any idea that the Holy Ghost exists; they mean simply, We do not have any idea of the presence of the Holy Spirit now in active ministry among us. A more accurate rendering would be, *"We have not so much as heard whether the Holy Spirit was given."* It's obvious they had heard of this because they were disciples of John the Baptist. And even if they do not know the First Testament's witness to the Spirit's existence ([Num 11:16-17](#), [24-29](#); [Is 63:10-11](#); [Joel 2:28-32](#)), they certainly would know such a witness from the preaching of John the Baptist:

*John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Luke 3:16 NASB)*

It's amusing to me how many people say we want to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire. If they just read the next verse they wouldn't say that.

*"And His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Luke 3:17 NASB)*

**The fire is the fire of judgment.**

In commenting on this text in Acts a well know commentator writes, *"So were they Christians already or not? It's tough to say—but certainly, Paul perceived they lacked something of the Holy Spirit in their lives."* It's tough to say? A Christian is somebody who believes in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If they had been on this side of the cross, they would have known about the Holy Spirit. They were First Testament Saints, believers in God, and followers of John the Baptist who was the last of the First Testament prophets and he was getting a people ready for the Messiah's arrival. They were ready; they just didn't know the Messiah.

There can be no gap between your salvation and the gift of the Spirit. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, you don't belong to Christ. Look what God promised Israel:

***"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:26-27 NASB)***

Now do you read any conditions there? What are the conditions for getting the spirit? What are they? Is there an "if" there? No. God says I will do it.

Look at how Lazarus [John Eleazar] puts it in the [Forth Gospel](#):

***Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"<sup>39</sup> But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39 NASB)***

Who receives the Holy Spirit? Those who believe. All who believe. The only condition given here to get the Spirit is faith, ***"those who believed in Him were to receive"***.

Once Jesus was glorified, the Spirit was immediately given. Notice how many believers have had the baptism of Spirit?

***For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13 NASB)***

How did we get into the Church, the body of Christ? We were not born into it as infants; the Body of Christ does not consist of everybody in the world, only certain individuals are in it. We are placed in the body by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of the Spirit began at Pentecost:

***"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup> "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' (Acts 11:15-16 NASB)***

Peter identifies the date of the baptizing with the Holy Spirit at its inception as Pentecost. This is the first time the baptism with the Holy Spirit takes place. The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred historically at Pentecost. Since we weren't there at Pentecost, when are you and I baptized by the Holy Spirit?

***"If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:17 NASB)***

Peter is preaching the Gospel to Cornelius. As he preaches, Cornelius believes, and the Holy Spirit descends upon him as he had upon the 120 at the beginning. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the 120 at the beginning was the fulfillment of the baptism of the Spirit. I conclude, then, that what is happening to Cornelius here is also the baptism by the Holy Spirit. So I think it is safe to say that a believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of his conversion; when he trusts in Christ. That is why there is no command in Scripture to be baptized by the Holy Spirit. There is no exhortation to receive the Holy Spirit—all believers already have Him.

In the nine verses in the New Testament that speak of the baptism by the Holy Spirit, none of them ever commands us to seek it. What is the inference here? All believers have it. The baptism by the Holy Spirit is a positional work of God; at faith we are placed into the body of Christ, and we can never lose that status. We are exhorted to be controlled with the Spirit, and to walk by the Spirit, but never to be baptized.

So, the baptism by the Holy Spirit is the work of Jesus Christ in putting believers into the church through the agency of the Holy Spirit. It happens at salvation.

So Paul asks these men:

***And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." (Acts 19:3 NASB)***

Imagine, for a moment, that you were a God-fearing Jew, who eagerly awaited the coming of Messiah. You knew that Messiah would make His appearance at Jerusalem. All your life you had been saving up money so that you could make one trip to the "holy city," Jerusalem. You, along with thousands of others, would go there for one of the feasts. And when you made your trip, it was during the time when John the Baptist was proclaiming the coming of Messiah. They had heard John preach, and they believed his message. But then, these men left the land of Palestine, where John was ministering. They went back home. They, therefore, missed the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. They missed the events of the crucifixion, the burial, the resurrection. They missed the great event of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. They were First Testament saints. Since Pentecost they had an out dated theology.

There is a group like this today, they are called futurists. They go about preaching the second coming of Christ, when in fact Christ has come. They are still living in the transition age. They have not realized the glories of the New Covenant.

***And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." (Acts 19:4 NASB)***

One can imagine that these Ephesian disciples heard about the coming of the Messiah through John's message, and they heard of their need to be ready to receive the Messiah and to ready themselves through repentance. Yet they actually do not seem to have heard that the Messiah had in fact come.

***And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 19:5 NASB)***

When Paul filled them in on the ministry of Christ they believed and were baptized.

***And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. (Acts 19:6 NASB)***

Paul laid his hands on them and at that point the spirit came and they spoke with languages and prophecy. You say there it is, there's the norm! That's how it happens. Remember we are in Acts. This is the last time this happens in the New Testament.

The laying on of hands signifies identification. Paul here is identifying these men with the body of Christ. He is identifying them with that new body formed by the Holy Spirit when he came on the day of Pentecost and is drawing them into the family of the Lord Jesus by laying his hands upon them.

Remember, Paul was not been present at Pentecost. He had only heard of what had happened. But now he sees something of it for himself. It would be like a new Pentecost. The Holy Spirit would be poured out and men would speak with other tongues. As far as Acts is concerned this is Paul's first experience of it.

Tongues were necessary so that they might all recognize that they were entering into the same experience as the infant church had at Jerusalem. They too were being "baptized into the body of Christ." Tongues and biblical speaking in is not ecstatic speech, or gibberish. Speaking in tongues was speaking in a known language which one had not studied.

Ephesus was a polyglot city of the Roman Empire. There were many languages spoken there, just as there had been in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. East and West met all along that coast. These men were now able to give the good news about Christ to the entire city.

It is very natural that it would be given on this particular occasion, for, as Paul tells us in First Corinthians 14, the gift of tongues is designed especially as a witness to unbelieving Jews.

Note that one of these gifts was designed for unbelievers and the other for believers. Paul particularly tells us this in First Corinthians 14. The gift of tongues, he says, is for unbelievers, but the gift of prophecy is for believers ([1 Cor 14:22](#)). Here in the community in Ephesus both groups were present.

To us believers are simply those who believe in the crucified and risen Christ and are thereby saved. But of course at that point in time there were large numbers of true 'believers' who knew nothing about His death and resurrection. Many were humble Jewish believers around the world who loved God and sought to walk with Him, fulfilling all the requirements of their faith, similar to those described in Luke 1 & 2.

Now notice the next verse:

***And there were in all about twelve men.*** (Acts 19:7 NASB)

Is there any significance to the number twelve here? Verse 1 tells us they were disciples and now we learn there were twelve of them. Greeks see numbers primarily as a quantity. But Hebrews see numbers primarily as quality or **symbol**. Twelve is the number of Israel—it is the number of God’s people.

It is difficult not to see Luke’s account of these twelve disciples as having a very close link with the immediately preceding account of the enlightenment of Apollos. There is a common element in the two accounts. Apollos was acquainted only with the “baptism of John” (18:25), just as these “disciples” had experienced only the “baptism of John” (19:3). These similar accounts are placed side-by-side to make an impression on the reader, and to further the argument which Luke is striving to develop. Not only did the gospel need to be proclaimed to those who never heard it before, but it also needed to be proclaimed to all those who were, in reality, the last of the Old Covenant saints, and who must transfer their faith from a Christ that is to come to the Lord Jesus who has come. If time is running out for the people of God, then time requires that the gospel be proclaimed to all those (like the Bereans, and Apollos) who were waiting for Messiah, but did not know that Jesus was the Promised Savior.

The clear purpose of mentioning “twelve” here is to link these new believers with the new Israel founded on the twelve Apostles ([Ephesians 2:20](#); [Revelation 21:14](#)). They are now Christ’s men and members of the Israel of God.

Believers, we do not have the same situation today, nor will we ever see this dilemma again. The problem for these “Old Covenant saints” was that their faith in the Messiah who was to come, had to be converted, updated, or revised so as to be a faith in the One who had come—Jesus of Nazareth.

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