
“Receive Ye The Holy Ghost”

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— Keith R. Blades

Following the Lord’s resurrection from the dead, He not only showed Himself alive unto His apostles and other chosen members of the remnant of Israel, but He also finished preparing His apostles to be able to function in His absence as the climactic stage in Israel’s program continued on. What had begun 3 plus years earlier with the ministry of John the Baptist was now exiting its initial portion with the event of the Lord’s resurrection and His final days on earth. When the Lord returned to His Father the climactic stage in the program would then enter its middle portion, during which repentance would be given to Israel, and the Lord would ‘sit at His Father’s right hand’ until the time came ‘to make His foes His footstool.’ This middle portion to the climactic stage would then be followed by the concluding portion, which would see the Lord’s day of wrath take place, along with the “great tribulation,” and this would all end with the Lord’s return to Israel for the establishment of the kingdom.

Wherefore during both the middle and concluding portions to the climactic stage in the program the apostles would be functioning in the Lord’s absence. And though the Lord had been preparing them for this time throughout His ministry among them, there were still some preparations for it that could only take place *following* His sufferings and resurrection from the dead.

Now it is in connection with these remaining preparations that the Lord did something unique to His apostles after He was resurrected from the dead and when He appeared unto them. In John 20 we read,...

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

(John 20:19–23)

Note, as verse 22 states, that the Lord “breathed on *them*” and said unto them “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

On first reading this event might seem somewhat peculiar or odd, for it seems to be out of place. In view of the prophesied schedule of events pertaining to the climactic stage in Israel’s program, this does not match up with the anticipated time for the giving of the Holy Ghost. It should not be until after the Lord had returned to the Father and the middle portion to the climactic stage in the program had arrived that the Holy Ghost would be given. Both the issue of the time for the remnant of Israel, (including the apostles), to be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and the issue of the time for the Holy Ghost to have His prophesied ministry to Israel and in the world, clearly awaited the Lord’s return to the Father and the arrival of the middle portion in the climactic stage. Hence whenever reference is

made to these issues in the Gospel accounts the time for their occurrence is *after* the Lord returns to the Father. For example,...

37 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.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (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 7:37–39)

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.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

(John 16:7–11)

Moreover the Lord made it clear to His apostles following His resurrection that they were not yet the beneficiaries of being baptized with the Holy Ghost, even though He had “breathed on *them*” and said unto them “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” Wherefore in Luke 24 we read how He said to them,...

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.

(Luke 24:49)

In connection with the apostles having a special role and ministry, the Holy Ghost Himself also had a special ministry to and with them.

And as Acts 1 records,...

4 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.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

(Acts 1:4–5)

What then occurred when the Lord ‘breathed on His apostles’ on the day of His resurrection from the dead and said unto them “Receive ye the Holy Ghost”? And what was the purpose or significance of it?

The Context

The specific context in which this event occurred is the key to understanding and appreciating what the Lord did. For when the Lord ‘breathed on His apostles’ and said to them “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” He did not do this in the context of the Holy Ghost’s *general* role and ministry that would occur once He had returned to the Father. Rather the Lord did this in the context of dealing with the apostles’ *specific* role and ministry after He departed, and more pointedly in connection with their final preparations for fulfilling that role and ministry. In connection with the apostles having a special role and ministry, the Holy Ghost Himself also had a special ministry to and with them. One that had features and functions to it that were uniquely for them. This is the reason why they received the Holy Ghost at this particular time and in this particular fashion.

Notice that before the Lord 'breathed on them' He began to speak to them about their special role and ministry, particularly declaring unto them that the time had arrived for Him to send them out as He Himself had been *sent out*.

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

(John 20:21)

Once again, the Lord had been preparing His apostles for this time, and they knew it was coming. And now that He had suffered and was raised from the dead, the time for them to be *sent out* to fulfill their specific role and ministry during the middle and final portions of the climactic stage in the program was at hand. With this being so the Lord not only announces this to them, but His follow-up act of 'breathing on them' was in direct connection with it. Hence verse 22 begins by saying, "And when he had said this,"...

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

(John 20:22-23)

Therefore by 'breathing on them' and saying unto them "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," the Lord did something that was directly connected with His apostles' special role and ministry. And as subsequent testimony relates, it was specifically for what they now needed to learn as the time for them to actually be 'sent out' rapidly approached.

So then by 'breathing on them' and saying unto them "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," the Lord made His apostles aware that this is exactly what was being done to them at this time. They were actually being given the Holy Ghost, and He was being given to them in accordance with their special role and ministry that was now at hand. And this is something that the apostles would

readily come to understand and appreciate at this time. For as they had been foretold, it would be by the Holy Ghost's ministry both in them and through them that they would authoritatively minister for God to Israel and beyond during the remainder of the climactic stage in the program. And indeed they would do this authoritatively. Hence in verse 23 the Lord pointedly referred to, and reminded them of, the particular issue of their God-given authority.

Moreover during the Lord's final days before departing to the Father, He would also give the apostles their final instructions and commandments regarding what they would need to do both at the beginning of their ministry once He was gone and during the fulfilling of it thereafter. And though there was much that they still needed to be taught, they were now not only able to receive the teaching, but they possessed a special provision for receiving it quickly and readily. For the giving of these final doctrines and instructions, (with all of the insight, understanding, and intelligence that they imparted to the apostles), is something that the Lord accomplished *through the Holy Ghost* whom He had given to them on the day of His resurrection. Hence as Acts 1:1-3 relate,...

1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

(Acts 1:1-3)

As verse 2 states, the Lord gave "commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." And this He did "through the Holy Ghost."

These then are the particular reasons why the Lord 'breathed on His apostles' on the day of His resurrection and said unto them "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." By so doing the apostles received the Holy Ghost in connection with the unique and special ministry belonging to them as the Lord's apostles to Israel.

Wherefore having received the Holy Ghost, they were first of all invested with the authority and capacity to function authoritatively for God in the remaining portions to the climactic stage in Israel's program. The transfer of God's authoritative witness to His nation was made at this particular time, with that witness now being turned over by the Son to the Holy Ghost, who in accordance with the Father's plan would execute His testimony to Israel through the apostles.

In addition to this, having received the Holy Ghost the apostles were provided with the ability to receive their final indoctrination regarding the function and responsibilities of their ministry once the Lord returned to the Father. "Through the Holy Ghost" the Lord "had given (them) commandments," by which they would knowingly and intelligently put their God-given authoritative ministry into practice, and would carry out the things God wanted done, and that needed to be done, as the climactic stage in the program proceeded on.

A Couple of Significant Ramifications

Now besides the importance of properly understanding and appreciating this event as it pertained to the Lord's apostles, there are also at least two significant ramifications to it. Significant especially because they testify against two unjust accusations or charges that are frequently leveled against the apostles for things they did that are recorded in the remainder of Acts 1.

It is commonly said by ones who fail to understand and appreciate the reality of God's program with Israel continuing on following the

Lord's rejection, that Peter and the rest of the apostles made two blunders in Acts 1. First they blundered, it is said, by asking the Lord a question that showed their ignorance of what God was now doing, and that showed they had not properly learned what they should have learned. This question being, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" as related in Acts 1:6. According to their critics, the apostles would not have asked this question if they had properly learned that God had put the establishment of the kingdom on hold in view of Israel's rejection of Christ. Then, it is said, they blundered again by impetuously appointing Matthias to take Judas' place, as recorded in Acts 1:15-26, instead of waiting for God to install Paul as Judas' replacement.

Now besides all of the various evidences that can be amassed against both of these accusations to prove them to be false and unjust, in view of the event of John 20:21-23, and in view of what Acts 1:1-3 states, the very notion that the apostles blundered in these two matters ought to be considered inconceivable. For the fact is that their understanding at this time was the product of them having 'received the Holy Ghost' for the very purpose of clearly understanding and comprehending what they needed to know. In addition their actions following the Lord's departure were the result of them having been given specific "commandments" by the Lord "through the Holy Ghost."¹

The Question in Acts 1:6

Simply and briefly put, when the apostles asked the Lord, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" they asked a question that showed clear understanding of exactly what was going on, especially as it pertains to and fits into the progression that was taking place in God's program with Israel. Moreover their question showed great insight and perception into a particular matter of timing as the climactic stage in the program would now be entering its middle,

and then final portions. Furthermore in view of all that the apostles had been taught about the program during the past three plus years, and especially in view of what they had just been taught during the past 40 days, they asked a specific question about a specific matter that they knew *had not been addressed*, yet about which they wanted to know.

Wherefore they did not ask a question that by any means showed a misunderstanding on their part, or ignorance of what God was doing. Instead their question was one of penetrating insight, especially since they perceived that it had not been addressed in all that they had been taught. However the reason it had not been addressed was on purpose, just as the Lord points out in His response.

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

(Acts 1:7)

As the Lord states, the answer to their question fell within the realm of information about the timing of certain events during the remainder of the program that God the Father was not disclosing to them just yet. Hence the Lord did not address the issue in their question during the previous forty days, nor would He address it now. Instead the Father would disclose it to them at the appropriate time as the program progressed on.

Nevertheless their question showed clear intelligence and understanding of what was going on as Israel’s program proceeded on, as well as showing great insight into the details of it. So much was this the case with them that a missing piece of information bothered them, and before the Lord departed they asked Him about it.

Therefore far from making a blunder and showing their ignorance, the apostles showed how that they had learned exactly what they were given to learn. They showed that they were one with the Lord in understanding, having learned

all that He gave them to learn when He had spent the previous forty days speaking to them “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

The Deed of Acts 1:15–26

Likewise the apostles did not blunder in filling the apostleship vacated by Judas, and doing it at the very time at which they did. For this too they not only did intelligently, but they did it in obedience to one of the “commandments” the Lord had previously given to them “through the Holy Ghost.”

Once again setting aside all other evidences proving that the apostles did the right thing, (including the fact that Paul could not meet God’s qualifications for filling Judas’ apostleship, and that his own apostleship is deliberately distinct and different from the 12),² the very tone of Peter’s handling of the proceeding testifies that he and the others were not acting impetuously or on their own, but that they were keeping a commandment that the Lord had given to them. Hence in what Peter declared he twice underscored the “must” factor in what they were doing. First as he introduced the issue, and then again when he described what they “must” now do.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

16 Men *and* brethren, this scripture **MUST NEEDS HAVE BEEN FULFILLED**, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. ...

21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, **MUST ONE BE ORDAINED** to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

(Acts 1:15–16; 21–22)

The overall tone of Peter’s words is not that of rashness or impetuosity; nor that of uncertainty, apprehension, or doubt. Rather the tone is one of sobriety and clear understanding of the situation. Moreover in view of the “must” factor, it is particularly one of compliance; of the clear fulfilling of an injunction, a command, or an obligation; and fulfilling it in a timely manner as a prerequisite to further issues. And this tone is in perfect accordance with the fact that the Lord had previously given Peter and the others “commandments” to be fulfilled once He was gone, and had done so “through the Holy Ghost.”

Far from being rash, hasty, or impulsive, Peter and the others acted in obedience, knowing that one of the first “commandments” they had been given by the Lord to fulfill following His departure was the filling of Judas’ vacated apostleship. Hence “must one be ordained,” as Peter said. Upon which they ordained Matthias, “and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

So then having received the Holy Ghost on the day of the Lord’s resurrection in accordance with their special authoritative role and ministry, and after having received forty days of Spirit-led illumination, instruction, and commandments from the Lord, the apostles did anything but blunder. Instead they acted in perfect accordance with understanding and appreciating both the Scriptures pertaining to that time and authoritatively beginning to fulfill the “commandments” that the Lord had given to them for that time.

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¹ For a detailed examination of the various evidences disproving these accusations, see for example the tape series *Repentance To Israel: Acts 1–7*; and the doctrinal tracts *The Apostle Paul & The 12 Apostles*; *The Apostle Paul and His Special Apostleship from God*; and the book *Satan and His Plan of Evil*.

² *Ibid.*