

The Holy Spirit of promise and the body of Christ

Table of Contents

How do you know when you were first saved?.....	1
When did the body of Christ begin?.....	4
The baptism of the Holy Spirit of promise.....	5
What about the Spirit of John 20:22?.....	7
The body of Christ and the fall of Israel.....	10
God's introduction of the dispensation of his grace.....	12
In conclusion.....	17

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

It is my understanding that the body of Christ has never been anything more or less than the body of people on earth indwelt by the Holy Spirit of promise. Since the Holy Spirit of promise first arrived in Acts 2 then it follows that the body of Christ first began at that time.

My understanding has recently been challenged by a very knowledgeable brother in Christ. I had to broaden my understanding in response to the brother's argument that, by my understanding, the body of Christ should have begun at John 20:22. I did not have a ready answer for this at the time. My understanding that the salvation power of the Holy Spirit of promise was not available until AFTER the Lord's death, burial and resurrection had to be broadened to include the Lord's EXALTATION to the right hand of the Father.

I am grateful to the brother that I have been given occasion to include this missing element in my case for beginning the body of Christ with the arrival of the Holy Spirit of promise. I have decided to lay out my understanding in as simple a manner as possible as an aid to my case in future exchanges.

How do you know when you were first saved?

I got saved when I received THAT HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE. I got saved when God SEALED ME with THAT HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE.

"In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also **after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,**" (Ephesians 1:13 AV)

So, PRIOR to my receiving that Holy Spirit of promise I was NOT a member of the body of Christ. I went to church. I sang spiritual songs. I argued doctrine. I believed that Jesus was the greatest spiritual teacher that ever lived. But I was NOT a member of the body of Christ until GOD DID SOMETHING. He sealed me with that Holy Spirit of promise.

We are SUPPOSED TO NOTICE the arrival of the Holy Spirit of promise. Why? Because the Spirit is an EARNEST. An earnest is a pledge, a down payment and a FORETASTE.

Without him we have no GUARANTEE from God that we are saved. Of what possible use is an earnest if we are never aware of his presence?

"Now he which stablisheth us with you **in Christ**, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the **earnest of the Spirit** in our hearts." (2 Corinthians 1:21-22 AV)

"For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the **earnest of the Spirit**." (2 Corinthians 5:4-5 AV)

The body of Christ is SANCTIFIED by the Holy Ghost – it is "set apart as holy" by the presence of the Holy Ghost. Without the Holy Ghost we are no different to any other bunch of people that claim righteousness.

"That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the *Gentiles*, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the *Gentiles* might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." (Romans 15:16 AV)

If you do not have the earnest of that Holy Spirit of promise in your heart then you are NONE OF HIS – you are NOT a member of his body.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. **Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.**" (Romans 8:9 AV)

From Romans 8:9 above it is clear that Paul also refers to that Holy Spirit of promise, with which we are sealed (Ephesians 1:13), as the Spirit (the Holy Spirit of promise), the Spirit of God (the Father) and the Spirit of Christ (the Son, the Word). Paul uses the three terms SYNONYMOUSLY. Each of the terms has the word Spirit in common. The SPIRIT (the Holy Spirit of promise) is also referred to as the SPIRIT of God and the SPIRIT of Christ. Please don't think that we are indwelt by three Spirits of God. We are baptised into ONE BODY by ONE SPIRIT.

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

"For through him we both have access by **one Spirit** unto the Father." (Ephesians 2:18 AV)

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

We are indwelt by the SPIRIT - the Holy Spirit of promise that was sent to us by the Father AND the Son (at the Father's right hand exalted).

I will not attempt a definition of the Godhead. If John, Peter or Paul never laid out a plain definition then who am I to attempt such a task? All we need to know is that we are in and indwelt by the SPIRIT OF THE CRUCIFIED JESUS CHRIST.

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (John 14:18 AV)

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2 AV)

"Now **the Lord is that Spirit**: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17 AV)

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more." (2 Corinthians 5:16 AV)

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20 AV)

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Galatians 6:14 AV)

"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of **the Spirit of Jesus Christ**," (Philippians 1:19 AV)

All three persons of God are involved in this because we have the SPIRIT (3rd person) of the SON (2nd person) and he that acknowledges the Son has the FATHER (1st person) also.

"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: *(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*" (1 John 2:23 AV)

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

"To wit, that God was in Christ, **reconciling the world unto himself**, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:19 AV)

Christ is now in us, saving us by his life.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, **being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.**" (Romans 5:10 AV)

We are now adopted sons of God and can call him Father.

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15 AV)

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Galatians 4:6 AV)

You cannot receive spiritual things if you do not have the Spirit of God - the Spirit that Paul also called the Holy Spirit of promise.

"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. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:11-14 AV)

When did the body of Christ begin?

If I first became a member of Christ's body when I was first sealed with the earnest of that Holy Spirit of promise THEN IT FOLLOWS that the body of Christ began with the first person to receive THAT HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE.

I need only prove when that Holy Spirit of promise first indwelt a human on this planet.

Where else is that Holy Spirit of promise mentioned?

"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 AV)

Paul is not around today so I cannot ask of him "Why did you call him THAT Holy Spirit of PROMISE?" But the record of scripture is the next best thing. I believe that anyone, who cannot see that Paul is referring to the Spirit that Jesus called "the promise of my Father", is being deliberately evasive and obtuse.

The Holy Spirit of PROMISE, the promise of the Father, first arrived in Acts 2. Jesus told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the PROMISE of the Father.

"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 AV)



Peter realised that the Lord had been exalted to the right hand of God and had received the promise of the Father - the promise of the Holy Ghost. He shed forth this Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.

"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father **the promise of the Holy Ghost**, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:33 AV)

Paul, thirty years later from his prison cell in Rome, (and long after the dispensing among us Gentiles of his gospel of God's grace and longsuffering,) is in total agreement with Peter as to WHEN the POWER of the Holy Spirit of promise was first shed forth to those of us who BELIEVE.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, **Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,**"
(Ephesians 1:19-20 AV)

The PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST, which was first shed forth on the day of Pentecost back in Acts 2, IS THE SAME HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE that I was sealed with on February 5th, 2006.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST (Acts 2:33)		THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT (Galatians 3:14)
		THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE (Ephesians 1:13)

The baptism of the Holy Spirit of promise

These three are ONE.

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7 AV)

The salvation power of the Holy Spirit of promise is ONE with the death, burial and resurrection of the Word – the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

It is the Holy Spirit of promise, also called the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9, Philippians 1:19), that BAPTISES us into the Lord's death, burial and resurrection.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3 AV)

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies **by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.**" (Romans 8:11 AV)

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

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27 AV)

Because of the Spirit's ONENESS with Christ, when we receive the Spirit we are baptised into the Lord's death, burial and resurrection. The salvation power of the Holy Spirit of promise is the central gift from God within his New Covenant. We know that the New Covenant could not come into effect until AFTER the death of the testator.

"For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Hebrews 9:16-17 AV)

Therefore those people of God who were indwelt by the Holy Spirit PRIOR to the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, were NOT indwelt by the Holy Spirit of PROMISE. There are numerous examples:

"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" (Genesis 41:38 AV)

"And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim." (Judges 3:10 AV)

"But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him." (Judges 6:34 AV)

"Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done." (Judges 14:5-6 AV)

As the brother pointed out to me, even Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

"And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:" (Luke 1:41 AV)

But the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost of the Old Covenant did not bring with him the salvation power of the Lord's death, burial and resurrection. We can only be baptised into the Lord's death, burial and resurrection by the Spirit of the New Covenant – the Holy Spirit of PROMISE.

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, **received not the promise:** God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Hebrews 11:39-40 AV)

We are most blessed to be living in the era in which men and women can receive the Holy Spirit of promise.

The MINISTRY of the Holy Spirit (Old and New Covenant) has always been to INDWELL men and women. So the Holy Spirit of promise is the SAME PERSON OF THE TRINITY that indwelt Joseph, Samson and Elisabeth. But the SALVATION POWER was only present in a FUTURE SENSE with Joseph, Samson and Elisabeth. The second person of the Trinity, the Lord who walked among us, had not yet CHANGED THE WHOLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND MEN WITH HIS CROSSWORK. When we receive the Holy Spirit in the post-Calvary era we are saved in a PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SENSE. The Lord's PAST crosswork saves us in a PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SENSE.

The brother accused me of being unscriptural with this business of FUTURE salvation for the saints who walked the earth prior to the possibility of receiving the Holy Spirit of promise. I am not of the understanding that no one was saved in a heavenly, eternal sense prior to the arrival of the Holy Spirit of promise. I just don't see how anyone could have been saved in a PAST and PRESENT sense in this TEMPORAL realm, prior to the Lord's shedding of blood.

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Hebrews 9:12 AV)

The great change that his shed blood brought about was EXPRESSED BY GOD when he sent the Holy Spirit of promise to this earthly, temporal realm. Once Joseph, Samson and Elisabeth died, their spirits entered God's ETERNAL realm. In God's eternal heavenly realm there cannot be linear time as we understand it. So although the Lord's crosswork was still future when Joseph, Samson and Elisabeth walked the earth, it became past, present and future once they died and entered God's eternal heavenly realm. How else could Abraham have seen the Lord's day?

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8:56 AV)

What about the Spirit of John 20:22?

I believed that at this point I had almost convinced the brother of the necessity of the presence of the Holy Spirit of promise for one to be a member of the body of Christ, thereby proving that the body of Christ began in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost.

But then the brother pointed out an example of the Holy Spirit being BREATHED on the apostles AFTER the Lord's death, burial and resurrection.

*"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, **Receive ye the Holy Ghost:** Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20:21-23 AV)*

Does this mean that the body of Christ began at John 20:22?

At the time of John 20:22 the Lord had died for our sins, he had been buried and he had been resurrected. So surely the Holy Spirit that he breathed on the apostles had the salvation power of the Holy Spirit of the New Covenant?

I was caught without a fully developed explanation at the time of our email exchanges. I have had more time to ponder it since and now present a more developed explanation.

The Holy Spirit of John 20:22 was not the Holy Spirit of PROMISE. The Lord did not receive the PROMISE OF THE FATHER until he had been EXALTED to God's right hand.

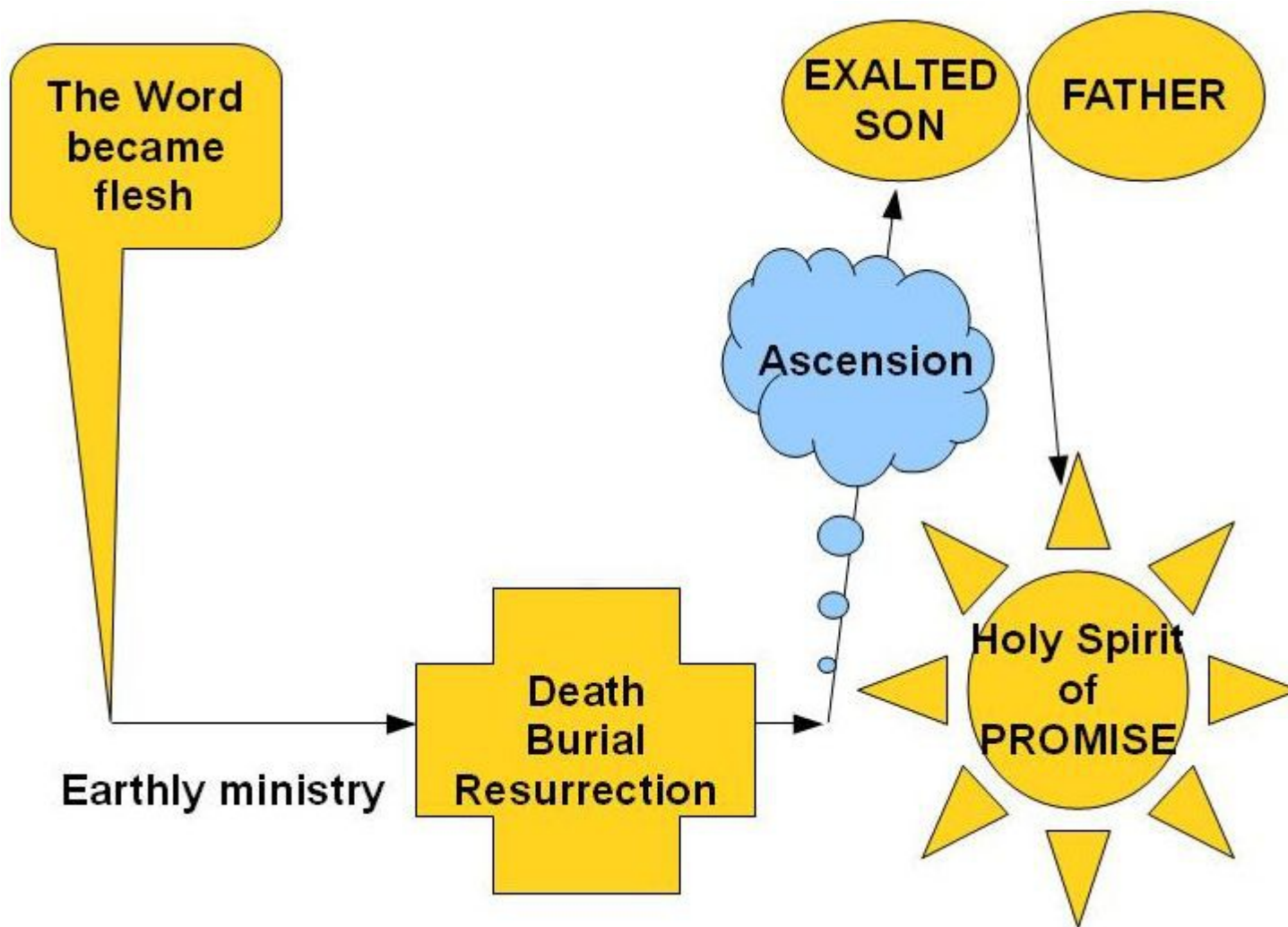
*"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet **given**; because that **Jesus was not yet glorified.**)" (John 7:38-39 AV)*

*"Therefore being **by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.**" (Acts 2:33 AV)*

What he had shed forth on the day of Pentecost was the promise of the Father - the Holy Spirit of PROMISE. What the people of Jerusalem SAW and HEARD in Peter and his little flock was the ministry of the INDWELLING Holy Spirit of promise.

So my criteria for the Holy Spirit of promise had to be broadened to include the Lord's EXALTATION to the right hand of the Father along with his death, burial and resurrection. The PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE salvation power of the Holy Ghost is reserved for those who receive the Holy Spirit of promise AFTER the Lord's DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION and EXALTATION to the Father's right hand. This excludes the Holy Spirit breathed on the apostles in John 20:22 and rules out any confusion as to when the body of Christ began.

(I included Acts 2:33 above in my reply to the brother's argument regarding John 20:22 but he ignored it and broke off our conversation at that time. Can't blame him really. I had only just been made aware of the need to account for the Spirit of John 20:22 and was unsure of my case at that time.)



The Lord's exaltation to the right hand of the Father is as necessary to our salvation as his death, burial and resurrection. He was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. The Holy Spirit of promise is the Spirit from the Father and our Saviour.

"For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my **right hand**," (Acts 2:34 AV)

"Him hath God **exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour**, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31 AV)

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even **at the right hand of God**, who also maketh intercession for us." (Romans 8:34 AV)

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, **where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God**." (Colossians 3:1 AV)

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is **set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens**;" (Hebrews 8:1 AV)

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, **sat down on the right hand of God;**" (Hebrews 10:12 AV)

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is **set down at the right hand of the throne of God.**" (Hebrews 12:2 AV)

The body of Christ and the fall of Israel

I was saved at the moment I repented of my ignorance of the overriding importance of our apostle Paul's office of apostle to the Gentiles and the apostle of the HEAVENLY Lord Jesus Christ. Paul never met the earthly Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was saved and given new revelations by the Lord in his heavenly ministry – at the right hand of God exalted. The preacher who first taught me these things was and is a mid-Acts dispensationalist. So in 2006 I initially took on board the standard teachings of mid-Acts dispensationalism.

From my local teacher and from brother Terry McLean in the U.S., I was educated into the understanding that the body of Christ began at the same time that the DISPENSATION of grace began - that Paul was the FIRST member of the body of Christ and that those Jews who received the Holy Spirit prior to Paul were in a different outfit called "believing Israel". These two outfits continued to expand through the preaching of Peter and the apostles of the circumcision (converts became members of "believing Israel") and the preaching of Paul and the apostles of the uncircumcision (converts became members of the body of Christ).

This understanding was full of holes and I soon began questioning it. "IS CHRIST DIVIDED?" (1 Corinthians 1:13). Was Paul (a member of the body of Christ) sent by the Holy Spirit on a missionary journey with Barnabas – a member of "believing Israel"? (Acts 4:36, 13:2). God is not so inelegant and inconsiderate that he would give us a doctrine that cannot be defended successfully and makes mid-Acts dispensationalism an easy target for detractors.

And so I came to my present understanding – that the body of Christ began with the first people who were indwelt by that Holy Spirit of promise (Acts 2). This was the PROPHESED event of the indwelling of God's Spirit.

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:" (Acts 2:16-18 AV)

Although it had not yet been REVEALED to Peter and his little flock, that the indwelling Holy Spirit of promise made them members of Christ's BODY, the Lord's first words to Paul make it quite clear that the Lord counts persecution of a Spirit-filled person as persecution of HIMSELF.

"And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou **me?**" (Acts 9:4 AV)

The MYSTERY event in the formation of the body of Christ took place eight chapters later - at the house of Cornelius.

"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."
(Acts 10:45 AV)

The inclusion of Gentiles in the body of Christ – on equal footing with the Jews – is one of the components of the mystery.

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me **the mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in **the mystery** of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:**" (Ephesians 3:1-6 AV)

The brother (and others no doubt) seem to have upgraded the teaching I first received in 2006. In their understanding the body of Christ began when Israel fell and the Jews saved prior to the fall of Israel were translated into the body of Christ at that time. Now this is a big improvement on the divided Christ that I was first taught. At least Christ is not divided in their understanding.

So in the brother's understanding the body of Christ came into existence without any scriptural reference whatsoever. Even the timing of the fall of Israel is not explicitly mentioned in scripture though I believe that we are right in connecting it to the stoning of Stephen – full of the Holy Ghost. Israel blasphemed the Holy Ghost in a most violent manner.

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." (Matthew 12:31 AV)

But it seems to me that this upgraded understanding is still incorrect. The body of Christ DID NOT REPLACE ISRAEL WHEN SHE FELL. Israel did not fall suddenly. She DIMINISHED over the period from the end of Acts 7 (Stephen's death) to Acts 28:28, when Paul finally pronounced them as set aside.

"Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the **diminishing** of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" (Romans 11:12 AV)

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:59-60 AV)

"And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and

seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that **the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles**, and that they will hear it." (Acts 28:25-28 AV)

Therefore the church, the body of Christ and Israel were BOTH in God's sight for most of the period covered by the book of Acts. The former INCREASED (from Acts 2) and the latter DIMINISHED (from Acts 7:60 to Acts 28:28). The signs and wonders that followed Paul among the Gentiles, right through to Acts 28, were intended to provoke Israel to jealousy (Romans 10:19, 11:11). The Lord persisted with trying to save Israel (as a nation) for about thirty years.

Such an important event as the formation of the body of Christ is surely documented in scripture. It is, in Acts 2 and Acts 10.

God's introduction of the dispensation of his grace

Such an important event as the introduction of the dispensation of grace is surely documented in scripture. It is, in Acts 9. In my understanding, you must treat the formation of the body of Christ as separate and preparatory events to God's introduction of the new dispensation of grace. God introduced the dispensation of grace, through Paul, to an existing body of people indwelt by the Holy Spirit of promise - just as God introduced the law through Moses, to an already existing chosen nation - Israel.

Although Paul's salvation in Acts 9 is a "me first" pattern of his GRACE and longsuffering toward ignorant and unbelieving sinners in this present dispensation,

"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it **ignorantly in unbelief**. And **the grace of our Lord** was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in **me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.**" (1 Timothy 1:13-16 AV)

it was not until much later that Paul began TESTIFYING the gospel of the grace of God. After his salvation Paul spent three years in Arabia and perhaps as long as ten years in Tarsus before he was fetched by Barnabas to help with the preaching at the church at Antioch. His personal experience of being saved, IN SPITE OF HIS BEING THE CHIEF OF SINNERS, was a great revelation to him that the dispensation of the extraordinary GRACE of God had begun.

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify **the gospel of the grace of God.**" (Acts 20:24 AV)

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of **the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:**" (Ephesians 3:1-2 AV)

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners; of whom I am chief.**" (1 Timothy 1:15 AV)

There seems to be a need among mid-Acts dispensationalists to distance themselves from the Holy Spirit that was poured out on the disciples on the day of Pentecost. The spiritual atmosphere of a present day Pauline grace fellowship is so totally different to the spiritual atmosphere of a present day Pentecostal or Charismatic church that they have developed various explanations to account for this.

The explanation that I was taught was that whereas the early Jewish Pentecostal saints were baptised WITH the Holy Spirit, in this present grace dispensation we are baptised BY the Holy Spirit INTO the body of Christ and that once we are in the body of Christ we should not expect to experience the Holy Spirit as a supernatural phenomenon. This explanation separates us from our status as FELLOWCITIZENS with the Jewish saints saved prior to Paul – Peter, John, Barnabas & co.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;" (Ephesians 2:19 AV)

This explanation also cuts the ground out from under our feet as members of Christ's body. The body of Christ is THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE MYSTERY.

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:" (Ephesians 3:9 AV)

It is the fellowship of several aspects of the mystery (e.g. Jew and Gentile in one body – Ephesians 3:3-6 and the fellowship of the mystery of the gospel – Ephesians 6:19, Philippians 1:5) but in particular it is the fellowship of the mystery of "Christ in you, the hope of glory".

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this **mystery** among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory:**" (Colossians 1:27 AV)

"God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:9 AV)

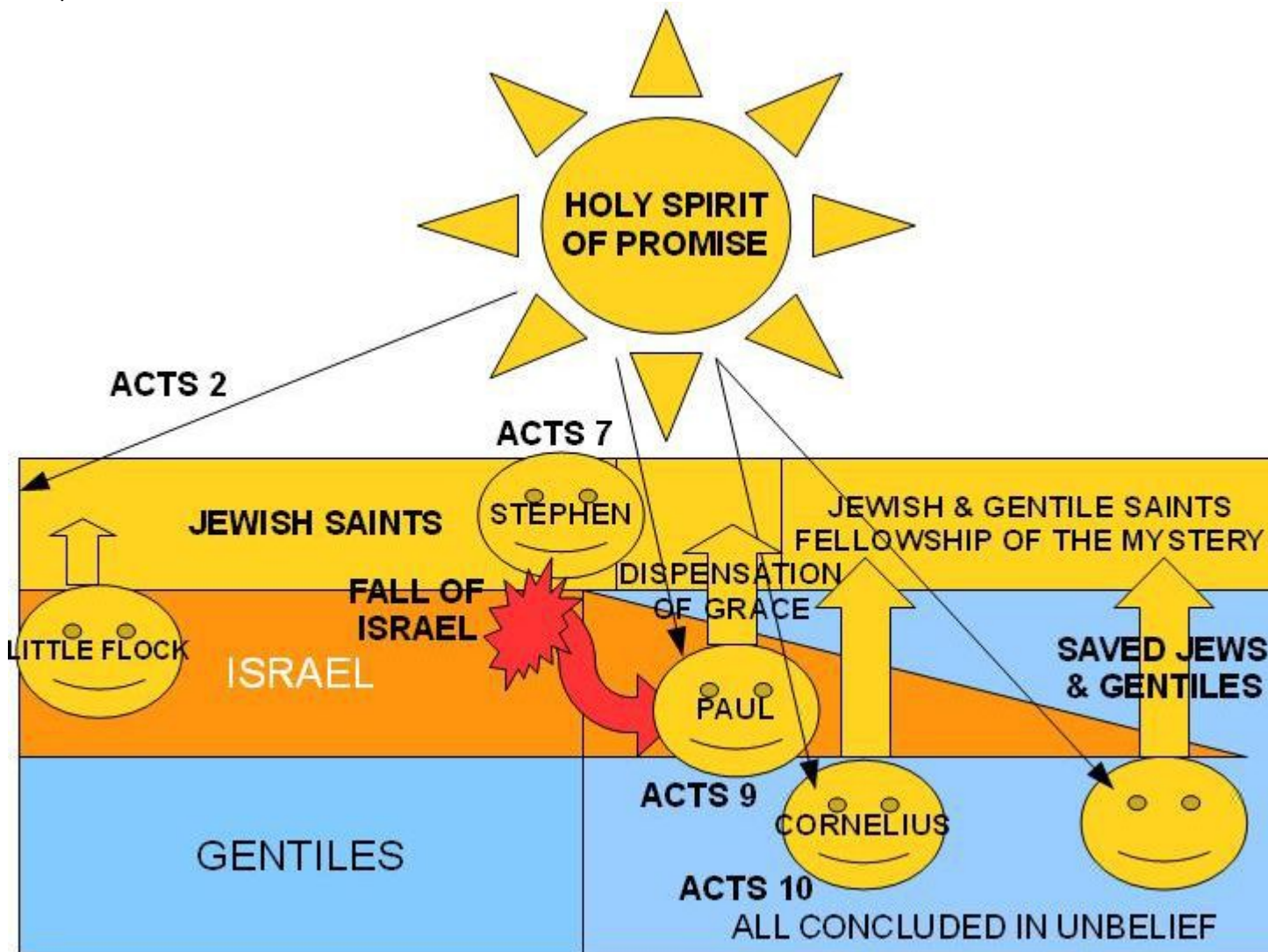
The Holy Spirit of promise (which Paul also called the Spirit of Christ) is the assurance of his presence within us, so the body of Christ is also THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY GHOST. (The word "communion" in 2 Corinthians 13:14 below can also be translated "fellowship").

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and **the communion of the Holy Ghost**, be with you all. Amen." (2 Corinthians 13:14 AV)

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, **if any fellowship of the Spirit**, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Philippians 2:1-2 AV)

"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John 3:24 AV)

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (1 John 4:13 AV)



It is SOLELY the ONGOING PRESENCE of the Holy Spirit of promise that joins us to CHRIST and to the other members of Christ's body. This was the case on the day of Pentecost and it is still the case today.

"But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Corinthians 6:17 AV)

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

So we must account for the vastly different spiritual atmospheres in present day Pentecostal/Charismatic and Pauline fellowships some other way. It is my understanding that modern day Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are IMPOSING their perception of what the Holy Spirit was doing, way back in the early church, onto

their people today. To their minds, whatever the Holy Spirit was doing way back then is surely what he is still doing today. They are treating the Holy Spirit like an automaton and are NOT CREDITING HIM WITH THE INTELLIGENCE TO SUPPLY APPROPRIATE MINISTRY FOR THE TIMES AND SEASONS.

Pauline fellowships tend to go to another extreme. Some teach that the Holy Spirit is not doing anything at all today except putting us in Christ's body. Once he has done that he is an undetectable presence and we should not expect any EXPERIENTIAL AND SUPERNATURAL stuff from him.

In my experience BOTH of these positions are wrong. The Holy Spirit of promise is as powerful today as he was on the day of Pentecost, but having the intelligence of God himself, the Holy Spirit of promise is ministering today AS HE SEES FIT FOR TODAY. We should not impose any limitations or particular expectations on him. I have yet to see a convincing demonstration of tongues speaking; nor have I seen any believers survive poison or deadly snake bites. But I have seen some impressive prophesying and I have experienced supernatural healing (prior to being saved - in answer to a prayer for me by a Christian pastor).

What I powerfully experienced in the weeks after I was first saved, (and first received that Holy Spirit of promise,) was a super-enhanced CLARITY, LIGHT AND LIFE in the Word of God. The bible came alive and was immensely and starkly more REAL AND TRUE. There was also an indescribable change in my everyday experience of life - the palpable presence of the mind and righteousness of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). If it was externally visible it would be a halo I suppose. Since the initial burst of a few weeks this presence of the Spirit has ebbed and flowed. We are not ALWAYS filled with the Spirit but Paul's urging us to "rejoice in the Lord always", to "sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord" and to "give thanks always for all things", are ways of becoming more filled.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; **but be filled with the Spirit**; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" (Ephesians 5:18-20 AV)

"Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice." (Philippians 4:4 AV)

I do the above things but most of all I pray to God regularly and ask that I may be filled with his Spirit. During his earthly ministry the Lord Jesus gave us a big tip in that regard. God responds to those who ask him for the Holy Spirit with pressing solicitation (IMPORTUNITY).

"And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, **yet because of his importunity** he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he

for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: **how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?**" (Luke 11:5-13 AV)

I also dream dreams. I get warnings, guidance and insight through dreams that I am sure come from the Holy Spirit. I guess this makes me an old man.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, **and your old men shall dream dreams:**" (Acts 2:17 AV)

In conclusion

- The Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13) is the "promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4), the "promise of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:33) that was first sent to Peter's little flock of Jews on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. He was first sent to Gentiles at the house of Cornelius in Acts 10.
- The Holy Spirit of promise has the power of salvation PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE. The Spirit PRIOR to the Lord's death, burial, resurrection and EXALTATION TO THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER had only the power of FUTURE salvation.
- I would ask the brother and any others who challenge my (and Paul's) assertion that "IF ANY MAN HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST HE IS NONE OF HIS" (Romans 8:9) – JUST WHAT IS IT that makes one a member of the body of Christ if it is not the Spirit of Christ – the Holy Spirit of promise; the promise that Jesus received of the Father when he was exalted to the Father's right hand?
- The body of Christ did not come into being to REPLACE Israel at the instant that Israel rejected the Holy Spirit of promise with the stoning of Stephen. Israel fell and DIMINISHED from the end of Acts 7 through to Acts 28:28, when God finally gave up on Israel. The body of Christ AND Israel were BOTH in God's sight from Acts 2 to Acts 28:28.
- Please don't think that I am trying to do away with mid-Acts dispensationalism by asserting that the body of Christ began with the Holy Spirit of promise in Acts 2. I still understand that God changed his spiritual economy or DISPENSATION in and through our apostle Paul. BUT HE DID NOT SEND A NEW HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE. We are partakers of THEIR (Israel's) spiritual things – the Holy Spirit of promise, AKA the promise of the Holy Ghost.

"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father **the promise of the Holy Ghost**, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:33 AV).

"It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. **For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things**, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." (Romans 15:27 AV)

"That the *Gentiles* should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and **partakers of his promise in Christ** by the gospel:" (Ephesians 3:6 AV)

"In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also **after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,**" (Ephesians 1:13 AV)