

The Biblical Unitarian Podcast - by Dustin Smith, PhD

Episode 79—How Did the Spirit-Inspired Jesus Become the Giver of the Spirit?

The podcast that aims to start conversations about the oneness and unity of God and about the humanity of Jesus

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Introduction

It is important to note the difference between the measure with which Jesus Christ is empowered *prior to* his resurrection and *after* his resurrection. Too often within discussions about Christology and who Jesus is there is a mixing together of Jesus’ *post*-resurrection empowerments from God, having received all authority in heaven and on earth, with Jesus’ empowerments possessed in his earthly ministry. In studying the Holy Spirit, we noted that within the Old Testament that it was God’s personal and powerful presence, working in the lives of his people. We also observed in our previous episode that the manner in which Jesus interacted with the Holy Spirit was akin to a prophet, that is, a spokesman for God who speaks authoritatively under the Spirit’s influence and empowerment.

But the question we want to answer today is, ‘How did the Spirit-inspired human Jesus become the giver of the Spirit after his resurrection?’ In other words, how is it that Jesus, who received the Holy Spirit from God during his earthly ministry, began to be described as the one who gives the Holy Spirit to the people of God?

For this study, we will limit our focus to the four canonical Gospels and the Book of Acts, as I want to do a separate episode on Paul’s theology of the Spirit sometime in the future. So, without further ado, let’s begin our investigation into how Jesus became the giver of the Spirit!

1 - Jesus, the Formerly Inspired, Now Gives the Spirit

Prior to the resurrection, Jesus already hinted that he would be the one who empowers his followers (according to Luke). Since this theology is held by Luke, we should be sure to look into the Book of Acts for a similar understanding:

- *"So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. (Luke 21:14-15)*

- *And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22)*

2 - Jesus' Promises to Send the Comforter/Paraclete

- *But this He spoke of the Spirit, which those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:39)*
- *When the Helper comes, which I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, it will testify about Me (John 15:26)*

Of course, Jesus giving the Spirit was predicted by John the Baptist, recorded by all 4 Gospels:

- *"As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matt 3:11, parallel in Luke 3:16)*
- *"I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:8)*
- *"I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' (John 1:33)*

3 - The Promised Spirit Ultimately Comes from God, not Jesus

- *"And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; (Acts 15:8)*
- *Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. (Acts 2:33)*

This is actually a point that Jesus himself makes:

- *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that it may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, (John 14:16-17)*
- *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)*
- *"When the Helper comes, which I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, it will testify about Me, (John 15:26)*

A few other references may corroborate this suggestion, if they are reflecting the divine passive:

- *for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:5)*
- *"And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' (Acts 11:16)*

In conclusion, we have observed that:

The manner in which Jesus, the Anointed One with the Holy Spirit, became the giver of the Holy Spirit is pretty straightforward. First, we noted that the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John both indicate that Jesus would become the giver of the Holy Spirit, with the Gospel of John explicitly stating that this occurred after his resurrection. Furthermore, the Fourth Gospel repeatedly indicates that Jesus would send the Spirit, namely the Spirit that proceeds forth from the Father. This confirmed the remark by John the Baptist, which was recorded in all four Gospels, that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus and the early Christian preaching recorded in the Book of Acts report that God the Father is the ultimate source of the Holy Spirit. Jesus asked of the Father and the Father sent the Spirit. The Father sends the Spirit in the name of Jesus. Jesus functions as an intermediary when it comes to the giving of the Spirit. The Spirit originates with the Father and it is sent through the risen and exalted Jesus. Therefore, the answer to the question ‘How did Jesus, the Anointed One with the Holy Spirit, become the giver of the Holy Spirit?’ appears to be that God gave the Spirit to the risen Jesus and now Jesus gives the Father’s Spirit to his followers. In other words, Jesus gives the Spirit because he was first given the Spirit by the Father.

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