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Conducted by  
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"Why is not the gift of the Holy Spirit available to christians today, if they believe in HEB: 13: 8, I quote, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever"? Does not this imply that if we trust, believe, and obey his teachings, his spiritual power is today exactly the same as when he first came to dwell here?"

THE saddest commentary on our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit today is, I believe, that in many places and minds this work must be accompanied by a supernatural manifestation of some sort. The reason I say it is saddening is because the work of the Holy Spirit can be and ought to be vital and far-reaching in the life of every christian, without supernatural manifestation. God did not send the Holy Spirit so that men and women could go into ecstatic trances and talk gibberish, and such like; He was sent so that the life of every christian could be so enriched that he or she would blossom forth into the full maturity of

christian understanding and experience. If we see a christian life that mirrors only the glory of Christ then we are seeing the greatest miracle possible. What more do we need, or what more does God expect of us? Perhaps the questioner did not have supernatural work in mind but I know that many people do when they ask questions about the Holy Spirit. However, let us analyse the Question.

### The Unchanging Christ

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). The student of the Hebrew letter will know that the new dispensation of Christ is far superior to the old dispensation of the law. The burden of the writer’s message is that the relationship under the law, which could not save or endure, is replaced by the relationship in Christ, which is a saving relationship and which will endure. Therefore, if Jesus is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (Heb. 5:9), and if all who obey him are ‘in’ him; then he must be as eternal as the salvation which he brings.

Furthermore, the writer speaks of things which can be shaken, and things which cannot (Heb. 12:26,27), and then goes on to say. “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us grace whereby we may serve God acceptably” (12:28). That kingdom came to us through the preaching of the word, which also endures; as Peter says, “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pet. 1:25).

So here we have the picture. An unchanging God; and unchanging Christ; an unchanging word; an unchanging kingdom. It is in this context that the writer says, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever”. The Law may pass away; leaders of the community may pass away; but Jesus Christ remains as ever. The text is a graphic way of alluding to past, present and future in order to affirm the unchanging nature of Christ. Therefore, we are warned not to be carried away by various kinds of strange and unenduring teachings.

So if a person is a christian then that person will believe in the unchanging power of Christ. Whether that power will always be dispensed in the same way is quite another matter and demands some study.

### The Gift of the Holy Spirit

The questioner asks, “Why is not the gift of the Holy Spirit available to christians today if they believe in HEB. 13:8?” The short answer is, of course, that the gift of the Holy Spirit is available to christians today, but perhaps the questioner is a little confused about this so I will explain.

Acts chapter 2 records that on the day of Pentecost the apostles were waiting in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to fall on them (see Acts 1:5). This event took place in the form of a rushing mighty wind and the cloven tongues of fire sitting on each of them. This power enabled them to speak the gospel in the languages of all the hearers who were present. This was Holy Spirit baptism and it was always given for a specific purpose. In this case it was given so that the people could hear the gospel in their own tongue. Later, as recorded in Acts 11:17,18, it was given to the household of Cornelius so that the Jews could be convinced that the Gentiles also were now recipients of the grace of God through the Gospel.

When Peter had convinced the people of the enormity of their crime in allowing Jesus to be crucified they cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” The answer which Peter gave under direct influence of the Holy Spirit was, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37,38). To put it another way, Peter was saying to them, “If you obey, the Holy Spirit will be given to you”. What did Peter mean by that statement?

If you remember the teaching of Jesus as John records it, you will be able to recall that Jesus said to Judas (not Iscariot) on one occasion, “If a man love me he will keep my words; and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). Here Jesus is saying that to the true believer there can be a gracious indwelling of deity; the Holy Guest. This is what Peter confirms on the day of Pentecost. Later on, when the

apostle Paul wrote a letter to Corinth, he made the point more sharply. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1-Cor. 3:16,17).

So now we have it. When a person is obedient to the gospel and is cleansing from sin then the Holy Spirit will enter that person as a willing Guest, not to make that person a miracle-worker, but to assist in the greatest miracle of all, that is, to work within that person so as to enrich that life and to bring it into full spiritual maturity before God.

#### The Operation of the Holy Spirit

That the Holy Spirit operates is not in question; the important question is, 'how does He operate?' We have noticed that in the initiatory work of the gospel there was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is also true to say that in the confirmatory stages of the Church that special gifts were given unto christians, but when things had out-lived their usefulness God dispensed with them. For example, the Passover, the Sabbath day, John the Baptist, Holy Spirit baptism, Miracles, and other people and things. As John records, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30,31). You will see, the important thing which is to remain is the love of God expressed in Christ in the gospel. When we have received the gospel we shall receive also the divine and enduring help of the Holy Spirit in our lives so that we can be fashioned to God's glory. Men must not get in the way by their so-called miraculous powers. The real miracle is in the power of the gospel.

#### The True Work of the Holy Spirit

I would not like to leave anyone with the impression that I think that the Holy Spirit has no power today; on the contrary, His power is illimitable in the life of the individual if that individual will not himself limit His power. Space does not permit to recount all the work of the Holy Spirit, but I will give some examples of the way in which He can and does help the child of God.

He:

1.	Sheds love in our hearts.	Rom. 5:5
2.	Causes us to have hope.	Rom. 15:3
3	Justifies us.	1 Cor. 6:11
4	Seals us to the day of redemption.	Eph. 4:30
5	Sanctifies us.	2 Thess. 2:13
6	Gives us access to the Father, through the Son.	Eph. 3:16
7	Builds us for dwelling-place of God.	Eph. 2:22
8	Bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God.	Rom. 8:16.
9	Helps our infirmities.	Rom. 8:26
10	Makes intercession for us.	Rom. 8:26
11	Strengthens us in the inner man.	Eph. 3:16

It is wonderful to think that God knows what we can become; He gives us the Holy Spirit so that we may become what He knows we can become. I believe that people have looked so much for the external supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit that they have not realised what help He can give them. After all, what is the purpose in christian living? Is it to bring ourselves before the gaze of people, or is it to so live our lives, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that people will see in us the glory of God and be persuaded to give their lives to Him also? I think we know the answer to that.

Yes, Jesus is immutable. Yes, the Holy Spirit still has power today. I am convinced that this power is not to be seen today in the working or miracles, but in the far greater work of preparing us for that great and glorious day when we shall be with our God and Christ throughout the ages of eternity. May God help us so to let Him operate in our lives.

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