

A Careful Bible Student

by Wayne Goff

Robertson L. Whiteside (1869-1951) was an excellent Bible student, preacher, college president and writer. His books were some of the very first in my library, and are among my greatest treasures because of the brevity and simplicity with which he wrote. His commentary on Romans was the one I depended on most when I first taught the book of Romans in a Bible Class. Foy E. Wallace said of brother Whiteside that he was able to get more out of a Bible verse and stop right there than any man he knew. I want to introduce an article which first appeared in the Gospel Advocate and then was reprinted by bro. Whiteside's daughter in a book titled "Reflections." It illustrates what brother Wallace was saying about him, and it is an excellent model for the careful Bible student.

The Question Asked

A sister in our Bible class asked this question: Did Paul receive the Holy Ghost before, or after, his baptism? If before, was he not saved before baptism? If after, did John say what he meant in John 14:15-17?

Brother Whiteside's Answer

The word "ghost" these days has come to mean a disembodied spirit, or spook. It is better, therefore, to use the term "Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is not a ghost.

If Saul received the Holy Spirit before he was baptized, the record does not say so. Why not abide by the record? If we do, we will know that Saul was not saved till he was baptized. (Read Acts 22:16.)

John did not say anything in John 14:15-17. In these verses he gave us a part of the speech made by the Lord on the night of the betrayal. Let us not hint that the Lord did not say what he meant — that sounds too much like a reflection on the Lord. — *Reflections*, p. 67.

My Observations

It is interesting to note that bro. Whiteside eliminated any *superstition* from the question by explaining the use of the phrase "Holy Spirit" over the phrase "Holy Ghost."

Secondly, he very carefully and simply pointed out that John's Gospel contains the words of the Holy Spirit and not the words of the apostle himself. When anyone handles the Word of God, he should do so carefully, respectfully and sincerely. Bro. Whiteside seemed to have sensed a careless, opinionated handling of the Bible text and mildly rebuked the querist.

Too many Bible readers read John 14:15-17 and *assume* that they are applicable to every disciple of the Lord. These verses contain the **promise** of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles, and should not be applied to every disciple of the Lord today! John's record should be consulted carefully and when you go back to John 13:1 you learn that Jesus was eating the Passover with His apostles, and when it ended Jesus began to wash the feet of His twelve. The text specifically refers to Judas Iscariot (13:2), Simon Peter (13:6-10), the disciple "*whom Jesus loved*" (13:23), and Thomas (14:5). Therefore, it is easy to see that it was the twelve apostles to whom Jesus made the promises found in John 14-16 concerning the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul himself said that he was an apostle as "*one born out of due time*" (1 Cor. 15:8). He was not present at the Passover Feast of John 14, but he explained and defended his apostleship throughout the New Testament (see 1 Cor. 15:9-10; Gal. 1 & 2; etc.)

Thirdly, bro. Whiteside noted what the inspired text **did say**, and **did not say**. He pointed out that Saul was saved at the point of baptism when he was baptized to wash away his sins, having called on the name of the Lord, Acts 22:16. Be careful with the biblical text!

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