

## WHAT IS THE MEANING OF 'SEAL'? (John 6:27; Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30)

### THE VERSES

John 6:27 <sup>27</sup> Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the son of man shall give unto you: **for Him hath the Father sealed.** (KJV)

*ESV:* ...for on him God the father has set his seal

*NKJV:* ...because God the Father has set his seal on him...

*ASV:* ...for him the Father, even God, hath sealed.

Eph. 1:13,14 <sup>13</sup> 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 the holy Spirit of promise,** <sup>14</sup> which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (KJV)

*ESV:* <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee (down payment) of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it (until God redeems his possession) to the praise of his glory."

*NKJV:* <sup>13</sup> In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

*ASV:* <sup>13</sup> in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,-- in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Eph 4:30 <sup>30</sup> And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are **sealed unto the day of redemption.**

*ESV:* And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

*NKJV:* And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

*ASV:* And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.

### THE CART AHEAD OF THE HORSE – BEGINNING WITH THE CONCLUSION

Interest in these passages is more than simply to define the word seal or sealed, but to give voice to the purpose of the sealing and how the sealing was manifested. Therefore, let us voice a conclusion to the matter so you will know from the beginning where our reasoning is headed. This will better permit you with your fine, honed skills of discernment to reckon whether our conclusions are fitting or non-fitting. The term 'seal' metaphorically conveys

authentication or accreditation. The person(s) or thing(s) sealed has some external attestation to the validity and reliability of its claim. The sealing gives evidence of assurance of what is claimed or promised to others beyond the mere testimony of the person or thing itself. This relates to the constant principle that the truth is to be established in the mouth of two or more witnesses (Deut.17:6; 19:15; Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1).

John 8:16-18 <sup>16</sup> And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. <sup>17</sup> It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. <sup>18</sup> I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.”

The sealing moves us from a subjective standard to an objective standard outside of one’s self.

- In John 6:27 the sealing of Jesus by the Father relates to the miraculous activities that accompanied Jesus in his ministry that supported his claims to being the Son of God.
- In Ephesians 1:13 and Ephesians 4:30 the sealing of the Ephesian brethren relates to the assurance they were saved by the hearing of faith, rather than by the works of the law.

Gal 3:2-5 <sup>2</sup> This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? <sup>3</sup> Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. <sup>5</sup> He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

We understand the sealing of the Ephesians would be the spiritual, miraculous gifts manifested among them due to the laying on of the apostles’ hands (particularly the hands of the apostle Paul in this case –Acts 19:6). This would reveal fully it was God’s messenger with God’s message that they obeyed in the obtaining of their salvation. The necessity of miraculous confirmation of the message of salvation was critical while the revelatory process was ongoing and not complete.

This represents a brief summary of our conclusions on these the idea of “sealed” as it is found in John 6:27, Ephesians 1:13, and Ephesians 4:30.

### THE TERM ‘SEALED’

The word English word translated “sealed” in John 6:27, Ephesians 1:13, and Ephesians 4:30 all come from the same term in the Greek.

- Greek number 4972
- σφραγίζω
- Anglicized: sphragizō

There are 17 passages with the term in the noun and verb form. The context will bring out the various usages of the term from literally placing a seal upon something for security or to secure something (Matt.27:66; Rev. 20:3; Dan. 6:17). The term can convey the idea of to seal to keep concealed or secret (Rev. 10:4).

Notice what a couple bible dictionaries comments:

- Vine’s notes that the term is literally a seal on a book or a role. Indicating security, postponement of message, or disclosure (Rev. 5:1,2,5,9). Metaphorically is carries the idea of authentication, external attestation, to show genuine, valid in claim, accredited.

- Thayer says in his defining and in his comments the following: "make sure, keep concealed, place, place mark upon." Thayer comments metaphorically regarding the term "...respecting God, who by the gift of the Holy Spirit indicates who are his (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor.1:22)."

The idea of "sealed" is to prove, confirm, attest a thing, authenticate, or place beyond doubt (Esther 8:8). That by which anything is confirmed, proved, authenticated as by a seal, (a token or proof). This holds up in passages beyond the ones we are studying.

Rom 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a **seal** of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:"

1Co 9:2 "If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the **seal** of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord."

The usage of the term 'seal' or 'sealing' in the passages of interest in our study is a reference to the process of declaring the authenticity or genuineness of what the person or persons claim to be; the assurance of what they promise (John 6:27) or the assurance of what they are promised (Eph. 1:14). The seal or sealing is the acknowledgement that the object under consideration is what it claims to be. **It is what it is!!**

R.C.H. Lenski in discussing John 3:33 makes an insightful statement regarding the idea of a seal. "A seal is not intended for the person issuing a document but for the one to whom it is issued to assure him. So God himself add seals to his truth not for his own sake or for the truth's sake but for our sake (John 3; p289)." This idea is seen in the very context of one of the passages under consideration.

John 6:27-30 <sup>27</sup> Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. <sup>28</sup> Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. <sup>30</sup> They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

### JOHN 6:27

Consider the immediate setting of John 6.

- A large crowd followed Jesus due to the healing of the sick.
- Jesus posed the question how this large crowd should be fed? This question was to test the disciples. Did they see the true significance of the healings? What did these miraculous activities indicate according to the anticipations of the O.T. scriptures?
- The situation was numbered with about 5,000 males in this multitude and the documented food source was 5 loaves and 2 fish. Jesus fed the multitude satisfactorily and thereafter 12 baskets of leftover bread fragments were collected.
- The result of the miracle is mixed. For on the one hand they conclude the proper association with the event (this is the prophet to come), but their motivation is marred due to improper understanding (moved to make him king by force).

- Jesus withdrew. The disciples take a ship toward Capernaum and Jesus met them at sea.
- The next day the absence of Jesus is noted and so the people set out to find him by crossing the sea and coming to Capernaum. They obviously have made a strong effort, and labored strenuously to find him.
- Jesus lays open that their motivation is incorrect (v.26). Your pursuit of me is not due to seeing the signs as evidence of the Messiah, but because you want to receive physical blessing from me without being physically or spiritually responsible. Jesus reasons if they had pursued him due to the miracles their minds would have been in pursuit of him as the Messiah, but their pursuit was simply in pursuit of a full stomach.

As we get to Jesus' words in John 6:26-27, Jesus points out to them the need to get their life in order. Their strenuous efforts were focused incorrectly, seeking physical welfare rather than spiritual sustenance. Why?

Matt 6:25 <sup>25</sup> Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Matt 6:30-33 <sup>30</sup> Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? <sup>32</sup> (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Jesus then points his audience to himself as the giver of the bread (truth) that can preserve the body forever. The issue is what proof does Jesus give to assure his words are true and he can fulfill the promise? Jesus says God the Father has placed his seal upon him. The sealing of Jesus by the Father is spoken of as confirming or authenticating Jesus' claim that he can give them the food that endures (or results in everlasting life). This brings us to the question, **how did the Father seal Jesus?**

To answer the question "how did the Father seal Jesus?" we will need to start by going back in time to what transpired at the time of Jesus' baptism.

Mat 3:16-17 <sup>16</sup> And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: <sup>17</sup> And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Lk 3:21-22 <sup>21</sup> Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, <sup>22</sup> And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

John 1:31-34 <sup>31</sup> And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. <sup>32</sup> And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. <sup>33</sup> And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and

remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. <sup>34</sup>

**And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.**

John 3:23-34 raises an interesting question regarding the ways in which the Father sealed the Son. Did John function as a seal of the Son?

John 3:33 <sup>33</sup> He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

Might we ask, is John speaking of himself but not as an ordinary believer? Why?

John 1:6 <sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.

John 1:33 <sup>33</sup> And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

Did John function as a seal? His words were the words of a very unique and special prophet of God. He received the word of revelation from heaven and that word was confirmed by the actions he observed at Jesus' baptism. The issue is does verse 34 speak of John or Jesus?

Jesus being sealed (or authenticated) was tied to the miraculous events connected with him. Examples in the scriptures are numerous. Consider a few:

1. WHAT DID PETER SAY WHEN HE PREACHED JESUS WAS THE CHRIST?

Acts 2:22 <sup>22</sup> Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man

**approved** of God among you by **miracles and wonders and signs**,

which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

The term approved is synonymous with attested. Funk and Wagnall's say of the word attest, "anything that confirms or ratifies; a pledge; authentication." The NASV in the margin has exhibited or accredited. The thought is to furnish or send with credentials, as an ambassador, one authorized. Jesus was indeed sent and not without credentials.

Heb 3:1 <sup>1</sup> Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

2. WHAT DID NICODEMUS SAY TO JESUS?

John 3:1-2 <sup>1</sup> There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: <sup>2</sup> The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these **miracles that thou doest**, except God be with him.

Nicodemus referenced the seal, or miraculous spiritual gifts, that authenticated Jesus as the Messiah.

3. WHAT DID JESUS SAY IN ARGUMENTATION, BUT WITH COMPASSION TO HIS ENEMIES?

John 10:31-42 <sup>31</sup> Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. <sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, Many **good works** have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? <sup>33</sup> The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? <sup>35</sup> If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; <sup>36</sup> Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? <sup>37</sup> If I do not the **works of my Father**, believe me not. <sup>38</sup> But if I do, though ye believe not me, **believe the works: that ye may know, and**

**believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.** <sup>39</sup> Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand, <sup>40</sup> And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. <sup>41</sup> And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. <sup>42</sup> **And many believed on him there.**

Pardon our dynamic equivalent translation but basically Jesus said, "Don't harden your hearts, but consider the seal."

The line of reasoning that Jesus pursued and this line of evidence that John pursued prepares us well to hear the words of John 20:30-31.

John 20:30-31 <sup>30</sup> And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: <sup>31</sup> **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.

These reflections on the sealing process takes us back now to John 6:27. In the context of this passage we find:

- a) Jesus stating that he can give the food that satisfies forever.
- b) Jesus stating that he can give you the water that satisfies forever
- c) The crowd of people asking for Jesus' credentials. They question his actions in light of Moses' actions, yet the bread Jesus offered would nourish forever and ever where one shall not hunger again.

Recall again the words of John 10:37-38.

John 10:37-38 <sup>37</sup> If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. <sup>38</sup> But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father *is* in me, and I in him.

In summary, Jesus was sealed by the direct testimony of the Father (Mt. 3:17), doing the works of his Father (Jn. 10:37,38) and at the end of his earthly life by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). Jesus' life was surrounded by intelligent signs and were confirmed by adequate witnesses (Heb. 2:3). Miraculous works authenticated Jesus as the Son of God and therein the sealing from the Father was demonstrated.

### **EPHESIANS 1:13,14**

Ephesians 1:13 states that the Ephesians, after hearing the word of truth (the gospel) and believing, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The spiritual blessing they enjoyed was in Christ and the sealing was a guarantee that continuing in Christ would bring them the inheritance promised to the children of God; for God is faithful in all His promises. The sealing of the holy spirit of promise was a guarantee the fullness of the promise would be fulfilled in due season. The words of Rom 8:21-23 come to mind:

Rom 8:21-23 <sup>21</sup> Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

Constantly in the N.T. we find the inauguration of the O.T. promises and prophecies; but the consummation of those promises and their fullness will be realized when Christ returns and ushers in the eternal state. The consummation is still out in the future.

There are several points we want you to notice about the verses and construction of Ephesians 1:13-14

1) THE "YOU."

The 'you' is significant in this passage for it indicates the Gentiles in contrast to the Jews and the apostles. The universality of the gospel and the delegated authority of the apostles is a constant theme in the scriptures for these two great truths had to be fully established in the early, formative years of the Lord's church.

2) THE "TRUST"

The trust the Ephesians now possessed came after hearing the word of truth (Jn. 17:17; Ja. 1:18) and the gospel of their salvation (Isa. 52:7; Lu.2:9-11; Rom.1:16).

3) THE "SEALED"

The fact the Ephesians were sealed. The term 'sealed' reveals they were marked to be distinguished from others. "To be sealed (esphragisthete; second person plural first aorist passive indicative of sphragizo) to be branded or marked by an impression which has been stamped on in order to distinguish one person or thing from another (Caldwell, p.41)." The aspects of sealing in the scriptures may indicate completion, authentication, appropriation and confirmation.

The primary purpose of the sealing of the Ephesians is explicitly stated as the giving of a pledge or 'down payment', a deposit that indicates the fulfillment of the agreement would definitely transpire at a later time.

Gen 38:17-20 <sup>17</sup> And he said, I will send *thee* a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give *me* a pledge, till thou send *it*? <sup>18</sup> And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that *is* in thine hand. And he gave *it* her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. <sup>19</sup> And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. <sup>20</sup> And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive *his* pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not.

The sealing was an assurance given to the Ephesians. The earthly ramifications of this sealing is worthy of consideration when we consider the state of the revelatory process at the time of this writing. The sealing revealed their claim to salvation went beyond a mere subjective claim. The sealing with the holy Spirit of promise would authenticate their relationship in Christ.

Eph 2:18-22 <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. <sup>19</sup> Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; <sup>20</sup> And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; <sup>21</sup> In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: <sup>22</sup> In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

The sealing authenticated the way of salvation was through the preaching of 'the faith' and not through 'the law'. Recall Galatians 3:2-8.

Gal 3:2-8 <sup>2</sup> This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? <sup>3</sup> Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if *it be* yet in vain. <sup>5</sup> He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the

hearing of faith? <sup>6</sup> Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. <sup>7</sup> Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

The sealing was the final word to the gainsayers. It is a done deal; the Gentiles are among the saved!!! We recall the role of a seal by an O.T. incident.

Jer 32:9-14 <sup>9</sup> And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that *was* in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, *even* seventeen shekels of silver. <sup>10</sup> And I subscribed the evidence, and **sealed it**, and took witnesses, and weighed *him* the money in the balances. <sup>11</sup> So I took the evidence of the purchase, *both* that which was sealed *according* to the law and custom, and that which was open: <sup>12</sup> And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's *son*, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. <sup>13</sup> And I charged Baruch before them, saying, <sup>14</sup> Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is **sealed**, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

All of the background work thus far leads up to the question on the minds of most bible readers regarding this passage: what did the sealing consisted of for the Ephesians? This challenging question really begets a question. What can we find that would give evidence beyond their own words that would prove their obedience to the gospel and their hope of salvation? The only answer that we can reason upon, that would be objective in nature, would be the scriptures and the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are sealed today with the Holy Spirit when we believe the words of the Spirit and permit them to abide within us. The sealing is indicated by our lives being in agreement with the divinely inspired word of God. The Holy Spirit has been the agent by which the articulating of the will of heaven has been known. When we manifest the reception of that testimony by an obedient faith we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. We can appeal to a standard outside of ourselves (Eph. 3:3-7; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; 1 Cor. 4:6).

Rom 8:16 <sup>16</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

We are only left with the comparing of scriptures to see how this is done. The only clear teaching we can read of is through the written word of God once the revelatory period is complete.

The mode of sealing with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:13 is not free of controversy. The issue has focused on whether the sealing involved a literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit or the miraculous gifts. The answer will not be found in the verse itself, but must be found from comparable study of other verses. When we consider other passages, the setting of the Ephesians, and when these words were penned relative to the revelatory process, it seems most likely the sealing is a reference to miraculous gifts.

Acts 19:1-6 <sup>1</sup> And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, <sup>2</sup> He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether

there be any Holy Ghost. <sup>3</sup> And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. <sup>4</sup> Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. <sup>5</sup> When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

The whole setting in Acts 19 demands proof that goes beyond word of mouth. Paul's question about receiving the Holy Spirit after hearing and believing the gospel would surely be a reference to miraculous gifts. Their response reveals much was amiss about their assumed salvation. Paul corrects these matters and these disciples correct their lack of understanding by being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul then laid his hands upon them and the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. This surely demonstrated what needed to be proven. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ and their obedience in baptism, specifically being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, was the fulfillment of their previous limited understanding.

Acts 19:6 would appear equivalent to Ephesians 1:13 and tells the mode of being sealed that is not stated in Ephesians 1:13. The striking similarity and common variables of this account with Acts 8 leads us to conclude the sealing with the Holy Spirit in this passage is a reference to the miraculous gifts received by the hands of the apostle.

Acts 8:14-19 <sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: <sup>15</sup> Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: <sup>16</sup> (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) <sup>17</sup> Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. <sup>18</sup> And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

The sealing with the Holy Spirit in Acts 19 has a twofold accreditation. First of all, they could be assured Paul was God's messenger with heaven's message (2 Cor.12:12). Secondly, the promise of salvation in the gospel message they believed would in due season be realized from a God who is ever faithful.

The conversion of an individual has never called for some internal miraculous activity. But the role of miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit during the era of ongoing revelation played a necessary role in:

- 1) The founding of the church as a divine institution
- 2) The assurance that it was God's word and not the mere reflection of men pursuing the spirit of the world (1 Cor 2:12)
- 3) The fulfilling of prophecy that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. (Acts 2:17)

It is very difficult to perceive in the apostolic era how a mere subjective testimony of reception of the promise of the Holy Spirit would serve as a sealing with the Holy Spirit. The whole idea of sealing or a seal involves something **visible** for accreditation or authentication.

The sealing of Jesus by the Father to authenticate Jesus being the Son of God, the apostle, the high priest of our profession, involved more than just words (at the time of his incarnation)!

Mark 2:9-11 <sup>9</sup> Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? <sup>10</sup> But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) <sup>11</sup> I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

John 10:37-38 <sup>37</sup> If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. <sup>38</sup> But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father *is* in me, and I in him.

The sealing (attestation) of the apostles as the delegated ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven on earth called for more than their personal testimony, even though they were eye witnesses of the ministry of Jesus.

2 Cor 5:18-20 <sup>18</sup> And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Acts 4:29-31 <sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, <sup>30</sup> By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that **signs and wonders** may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. <sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Acts 5:12 <sup>12</sup> And by the hands of the apostles were many **signs and wonders** wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

Heb 2:3-4 <sup>3</sup> How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was **confirmed unto us** by them that heard *him*; <sup>4</sup> God also bearing *them* witness, both with **signs and wonders**, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

2 Cor 12:12 <sup>12</sup> Truly the **signs of an apostle** were wrought among you in all patience, in **signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds**.

1 Cor 9:2 <sup>2</sup> If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the **seal of mine apostleship** are ye in the Lord.

The idea that 'sealing' called for more than personal testimony and an appeal to something external and visible is illustrated by Paul's word to the church at Corinth who were troubled about his apostleship. Paul is telling the Corinthians that one thing is very clear, he certainly gave them proof of his apostleship when he labored among them at Corinth. The signs of Paul's apostleship (2 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 15:18,19; 1 Cor. 1:7) were manifested among the Corinthians in abundant fashion and are still evident (1 Cor. 1:6,7). The Corinthian church's very existence declares Paul's apostleship. Paul is not here appealing to simply having a successful ministry or the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 4:15), but to the spiritual gifts received through the laying on of his hands. These served as a seal affixed to his claim of apostleship that made his claim firm, secure and indisputable. These new arrivals at Corinth may preach and convert many but the abundance of spiritual gifts they enjoyed, and some even

flaunted, guaranteed Paul was more than simply a preacher of the gospel but indeed an apostle of Jesus Christ. If this is not true, whence cometh the spiritual gifts among the Corinthians, save by Paul's hands?

Paul consider the church at Corinth a seal of his apostleship due to the many spiritual gifts they possessed due to the laying on of his hands.

1Cor 1:4-8 <sup>4</sup> (appears to give us helpful background to understanding the sense of 1 Cor. 9:2) I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; <sup>5</sup> That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and *in* all knowledge; <sup>6</sup> Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: <sup>7</sup> So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>8</sup> Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1Corinthians 1:4-8 surely gives us much added insight into the sealing being by the miraculous gifts of the spirit. It wasn't the seal that saved, as men were saved when they believed the gospel. The sealing was critical in an era of ongoing revelation and the transition period of establishing a new covenant relationship that was no longer the Mosaic system. Furthermore, the universality of the gospel was a critical issue during this time. The sealing by the miraculous gifts truly manifested who were the apostles of Jesus Christ. The sealing by miraculous gifts in turn confirmed the gospel message believed was indeed the true message of salvation and that salvation was only through Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12 <sup>12</sup> Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

We see salvation was by obedience to the gospel, which put one in Christ. The hope extended by the gospel was guaranteed by the reception of spiritual gifts for multiple reasons:

- 1) The spiritual gifts established the authority of the apostles as God's ambassadors.
- 2) The spiritual gifts confirmed the doctrine taught was the truth from heaven.
- 3) The spiritual gifts gave the means for the edification of the church until the "unity of the faith (Eph 4:13)" was fully revealed and completed.

By extension, the miraculous activity of the ongoing revelatory period (as documented by reliable testimony) assures those living after the completed revelation that the revelation was not the mere thinking of men, but truly the word of God.

[NOTE: A moment of diversion. It is unfortunate that our teaching on miracles has been dominated by having to show they have ceased and not given equal time to show how significant miracles are to confirming the truth for us, even though we do not experience them today. We need to keep the forest in view and not only look at the trees. The critical point of the Old Testament is that it showed clearly there is one God as it moved the redemptive plan forward. The critical point of the New Testament, as it unfolds, is to make clear the universality of the gospel – the only way of salvation.]

Sealing in the days of ongoing revelation seem to consistently involve something observable and usually miraculous. The reason we state this in the manner we did is to not reach an unwarranted conclusion or ignore other passages.

Rom 15:28 <sup>28</sup> When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed (sphragisomenos – aorist middle participle of verb sphragizo) to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

The use of the word 'sealed' in this passage appears difficult to explain. It would appear Paul desired to authenticate the meaning of the contribution by being personally present or to explain

to the Jewish recipients the meaning of this contribution. This was not simply a matter of feeding the poor, but emphasizing the sureness of the Gentiles conversion and their inclusion into the one body fellowship with their Jewish brethren. The common variable with the term here is not miraculous, but Paul being personally and visibly present to assure the brethren of what should be concluded from the contribution brought to them.

While each individual did not have to be sealed with the Holy Spirit (i.e. possessed a miraculous gift by the hands of the apostles), all could be assured the church was the body of the saved from the spirit of God being manifested within the church.

1Cor 3:16-17 <sup>16</sup> Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? <sup>17</sup> If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.

The sealing of the Holy Spirit today does not involve the miraculous. The assurance of the Holy Spirit, in relationship to the day of redemption, is fulfilled by the agreement of our words and deeds being in harmony with the revealed word of God. There is a visible, objective standard outside of our self that bears record of our beliefs (i.e. the articulated word of God revealed and over seen by the Holy Spirit.).

It is often noted that a weakness of contending the sealing with the Holy Spirit is a reference to the miraculous measure of the Spirit is that it would have no application to the present. For example, "If the earnest is restricted to either of these measures, then it would have no application today, unless these manifestations of the first century apply for all times, and believers everywhere are 'grandfathered' in on the first-century reception of the Spirit (Tarbet, p.460; Studies in Ephesians, Denton Lectures)." The above quote takes issue with the sealing with the Holy Spirit being miraculous spiritual gifts by question what its significance would be for the church today? The baptism with the Holy Spirit and the "miraculous measure" of the Holy Spirit were a first century phenomenon, but shall we say it has no applicability to my faith today? While one may never experience the origin of a river, let it never be said the river has no influence on their life. The apostle Peter spoke of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 15), even though it was no longer an ongoing event to show the universality of the gospel. The fact there are events in the first century church that are no longer taking place today, doesn't mean those events of the first century do not play a significant role in the establishing of our faith today. This claim of no significance today seems very short sighted. The apostles of Jesus Christ were a first century phenomenon and no longer exist, so should we conclude they had no significance for us today? To follow this line of reasoning relative to the seal being miraculous spiritual gifts, appears to not grasp the significance of confirmation. Once something is confirmed that confirmation maintains its effectiveness and is beneficial for all for all time.

Rom 15:8-9 <sup>8</sup> Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to **confirm** the promises *made* unto the fathers: <sup>9</sup> And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

The confirmation of the promises of God by Jesus' ministry was a first century event. We could well ask, "Does those promises and Jesus' ministry have any applicability to the truth we hold today as the Lord's church?" Yes. Neither time, nor the fact that the action of confirmation is not being repeated, removes the strength of the confirmation. Unbelief isn't even valid grounds for demanding the action of confirmation to be repeated. Once an action or series of actions have fulfilled their role of confirmation the applicability of that confirmation remains effective evidence for faith for all times and all men.

While our sealing today does not involve the experiencing of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit our sealing does involve the result of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. The miraculous activities of the past confirmed the word of God as the truth of heaven. We treasure these past actions today, for they still play a role in our salvation. Once confirmed, always confirmed. We might well ask, "Without the miraculous sealing involved in the ministry of Jesus, without the confirming miracles of the apostles as God's messenger, and without the miraculous gifts by their hands permitting the early believers to move toward maturity while the word was being completed, where would our faith be today?"

We need to be reminded one does not need to personally experience a miracle or actually observe a miracle to benefit from the miracles done. God's purpose for miracles is still accomplished or intact if one does not observe or experience them. The Bible is very explicit and clear that miracles done in the days of Jesus and the apostles did not have to be personally seen or experienced to benefit others. All that was and is necessary is reliable testimony of the miracles and an understanding of their purpose.

Mat 11:2-6 <sup>2</sup> Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, <sup>3</sup> And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: <sup>5</sup> The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

It is little wonder that John wrote John 20:30-31.

John 20:30-31 <sup>30</sup> And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: <sup>31</sup> 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.

While the scriptures are always the final word on salvation (they cannot be broken), the contextual setting of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and its effects should not be ignored (or denied) when the revelatory process is still ongoing. There is a distinctive role and function of the Holy Spirit. There is also a sameness of purpose for the Holy Spirit among different eras of either ongoing revelation or completed revelation.

The redemptive plan involved an intricate interweaving of the declaration and revealing of the scriptures. The role of the miraculous was involved to authenticate the scriptures and their claims. The "sealing" by miraculous spiritual gifts was once necessitated since new revelation was not yet complete, but is now the "sealing" is fulfilled by the Holy Spirit through the completed word of God. The scriptures show this process by revealing when to expect or anticipate miracles, the meaning of miracles, the recording of miraculous occurrences, and teaching us when miracles would no longer occur. The Holy Spirit articulates the will of heaven today through the scriptures. The assurance of my faith is founded upon the written word of God. The sealing with the Holy Spirit by the miraculous gifts of the early church affects my faith today for it confirms the Christian faith as divine in origin. The salvation and the church are not the mere product of man's mind, so the hope of the fulfillment of scriptural promises is founded upon divine effort. We can appeal to the scriptures as an objective standard outside of our self for assurance. How do I know such and such is true? We can truthfully and rightly answer because the Bible tells me so!!

### EPHESIANS 4:30

This passage turns from the positive awareness of the sealing with the Holy Spirit which assured them of their hope as the children of God to a negative reflection on their behavior that could negate their position and hope. This statement to not grieve the Holy Spirit can lead to a number of questions.

- 1) How does one grieve the Holy Spirit?
- 2) How does the human spirit go about grieving the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit literally indwells a person?

It is only the first question that is ours to answer with this study.

The term "grieve (383a – 3076)" in the verb form is "to distress." The most common translation of the term is "very sorry, sorrowful." You can see this in numerous passages.

- a) The rich young ruler (Mk. 10:22)
- b) Peter (Jn. 21:17)
- c) One's brother (Rom 14:15)
- d) Paul and the Corinthians (2Cor. 2:2-5)
- e) Heaviness from temptations (1 Pet. 1:6)

A continued reading of the Ephesian letter would show that disappointing or saddening the Holy Spirit comes from not submit to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The articulations of the Holy Spirit came by inspired forth tellers (1Th 5:20 "Despise not prophesying") or by the hearing of the inspired word of God given at that time (2Ti 3:16 "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:..."). One might ask, "How else does the Holy Spirit express the will of God or direct mankind today, other than by the preaching and reading of the scriptures?"

Consider if you will the following line of reasoning that begins with well-known verses in 2Peter 1.

2Pe 1:20-21 <sup>20</sup> Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

When the Holy Spirit did speak directly through the prophets, the grieving of the Holy Spirit related to God's people not heeding the words of the inspired spokesman.

Isa 63:10 <sup>10</sup> But **they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit**: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them. [The NKJV has grieved for the word vexed.]

Num 14:11 <sup>11</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people **provoke me?** and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

Psa 78:40 <sup>40</sup> How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* **grieve him** in the desert!

Act 7:51 <sup>51</sup> Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always **resist the Holy Ghost**: as your fathers *did*, so do ye.

(See also Nehemiah 9:20-30 reveals the constant refusal to heed the words of the prophets, so grieving the Holy Spirit).

The sealing in Ephesians 4:30 is spoken of in view of the day of redemption. Although, we have different prepositions here and in 1 Corinthians 15:29 the line of reasoning seems to be of the same nature. The sealing gave them assurance (a pledge) looking forward to their being a part of the out-resurrection.

Php 3:9-11<sup>9</sup> And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: <sup>10</sup> That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; <sup>11</sup> If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Why were those baptized in preparation of their death if there was no resurrection? This sealing had great significance for them in light of where they were in the process of the ongoing revelation of the redemptive plan. This sealing has great significance for us in light of where we are with the completed revelation regarding the redemptive plan.

2 Cor 5:4-5 <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

Our sealing today comes back to agreement with the articulated scriptures revealed and inspired by the Holy Spirit

John 17:17 <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

When these words abide within us (or are believed – Heb. 4:2), heeded, continued in, translated into behavior, produced due to proper motives, and produced due to proper motives we have the mark (the seal) of the Holy Spirit. This is not based upon human construction, but based upon the authority of the scriptures.

Rom 8:16 <sup>16</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:....

The potentiality of redemption longed for and spoken of by the prophets was manifested (given reality) with Jesus death on the cross.

1Pe 1:18-19 <sup>18</sup> Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; <sup>19</sup> But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Tit 2:11 <sup>11</sup> For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,.... The reality or inauguration of that redemption begins when one is obedient to the gospel due to their faith in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God

Rom 3:24 <sup>24</sup> Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Eph 2:8-10 <sup>8</sup> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The consummation of our redemption will occur when the Lord returns. It is then that we are resurrected, fitted for the environment of the new heavens and new earth, and enter the eternal state to reside in the presence of deity.

Rom 8:23 <sup>23</sup> And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

Php 3:21 <sup>21</sup> Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Our salvation founded in hope, a "hope that maketh not ashamed due to the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (Rom 5:5)." The assurance of our salvation is founded on the miraculous confirmation of the word preached and the early church being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise by the visible miraculous gifts of the Spirit. These gifts give us the assurance the completed word of God is absolutely that and when we live in compliance with the confirmed word of salvation. We also can entertain the assurance of the Holy Spirit in our lives. For those that think this does harm to the work of the Holy Spirit today, it may be well to remember there are greater things than miraculous works.

Luke 10:20 <sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

John 5:20-21 <sup>20</sup> For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. <sup>21</sup> For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

John 14:12 <sup>12</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Eph 2:1-7 <sup>1</sup> And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; <sup>2</sup> Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: <sup>3</sup> Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, <sup>5</sup> Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) <sup>6</sup> And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: <sup>7</sup> That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

### RESTATING THE CONCLUSION

The term 'seal' metaphorically conveys authentication or accreditation. The person(s) or thing(s) sealed has some external attestation to the validity and reliability of its claim. The sealing gives evidence of assurance of what is claimed or promised to others beyond the mere testimony of the person or thing itself. This relates to the constant principle that the truth is to be established in the mouth of two or more witnesses (Deut.17:6; 19:15; Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1).

John 8:16-18 <sup>16</sup> And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. <sup>17</sup> It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. <sup>18</sup> I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me."

The sealing moves us from a subjective standard to an objective standard outside of one's self.

- In John 6:27 the sealing of Jesus by the Father relates to the miraculous activities that accompanied Jesus in his ministry that supported his claims to being the Son of God.
- In Ephesians 1:13 and Ephesians 4:30 the sealing of the Ephesian brethren relates to the assurance they were saved by the hearing of faith, rather than by the works of the law.

Gal 3:2-5 <sup>2</sup> This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? <sup>3</sup> Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. <sup>5</sup> He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

We understand the sealing of the Ephesians would be the spiritual, miraculous gifts manifested among them due to the laying on of the apostles' hands (particularly the hands of the apostle Paul in this case –Acts 19:6). This would reveal fully it was God's messenger with God's message that they obeyed in the obtaining of their salvation. The necessity of miraculous confirmation of the message of salvation was critical while the revelatory process was ongoing and not complete.

This represents a brief summary of our conclusions on these the idea of "sealed" as it is found in John 6:27, Ephesians 1:13, and Ephesians 4:30.

We pray that this study has been helpful and has rightly divided the word of truth.