

Gift & Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today.

Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. 224 pages.

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Reviewed by John Paul Lathrop

Dr. Craig Keener has established himself as a highly respected New Testament scholar. Over the years he has written a number of very significant commentaries including works on the gospels of Matthew and John, and the book of Acts. His highly acclaimed *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* is one of his best known works. In addition, he has produced books devoted to specific biblical topics such as miracles, women in marriage and ministry, and divorce and remarriage. He is not one to shy away from controversial subjects. In this present volume Keener writes about the Holy Spirit including the sometimes controversial charismatic aspects of His ministry. *Gift & Giver* was first published in the United States in 2001. More recently it has been translated into Indonesian and published in Indonesia.

The book is based on material that was included in an earlier book that Keener wrote. The earlier book was called *3 Crucial Questions about the Holy Spirit*. *Gift & Giver* consists of an introduction, ten chapters, a conclusion, and an appendix. The chapter titles are: "Recognizing the Spirit's Voice," "Learning to Hear God's Heart by the Spirit," "The Spirit Empowers Us for Evangelism," "The Spirit and How We Live," "Are Spiritual Gifts for Today?" "A Closer Look at Some Spiritual Gifts," "The Spirit and Salvation," "When Are We Baptized in the Spirit?" "Tongues and the Spirit," and "Why Discern the Spirit?" The appendix of the book is titled "What Can Bible Stories Teach Us?"

As the chapter titles indicate Keener covers a number of aspects of the Spirit's ministry. The subjects he covers include our sanctification and empowerment for ministry, the empowerment discussed includes the Spirit's part in both our evangelism and spiritual gifts. As you may also surmise from some of the chapter titles this book is not merely a systematic theology on the Holy Spirit. While the book certainly contains theology (there are many biblical references in the text) it is geared toward instructing and equipping the believer to practically enter into experiencing the various ministries of the Spirit. At different points

in the book Keener includes stories of his own experiences with the Holy Spirit. These accounts demonstrate that even in our day the Holy Spirit continues to carry on the ministries that He did in and through His people in the scriptures.

I particularly enjoyed some of the sections of the book that dealt with what are typically called the charismatic ministries of the Holy Spirit. For example, in chapter 5, Keener deals with the question of whether or not spiritual gifts are for today. As he deals with this subject he addresses a view of spiritual gifts, held by some, known as cessationism. This view maintains that some of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit like healing, prophecy, tongues and miracles are no longer in existence today. The author does not subscribe to this school of thought. In the chapter he states the biblical reasons why he does not agree with this view of spiritual gifts. His reasons include: Luke considers the empowerment that the church received at Pentecost to be the normal experience for Christians, the miracle-working ministry of Jesus is to be a model for His disciples, and the apostle Paul's sees spiritual gifts continuing as long as the church does. Keener states that he does not believe a person would adopt the cessationist viewpoint from reading the Bible unless they were previously taught this point of view.

I also enjoyed his chapter about being baptized in the Holy Spirit. When discussing this subject Keener explains the major views about this experience, both what it is and when it takes place in the life of a believer. As he explains, some see this experience with the Holy Spirit as taking place when a person is saved and others see it as taking place at a point subsequent to salvation. He points out that those who believe that one is baptized in the Spirit at conversion typically rely on Paul's teaching in his letters whereas those who believe that it happens after conversion point to what Luke wrote in Acts. Keener handles this sometimes volatile subject with grace. He maintains that all of the Spirit's work becomes available to the Christian at conversion but that some aspects of His work may be received after conversion.

The author's treatment of the subjects covered in this book are sufficiently thorough and, I think, fair. It is a work of great substance, but it is written without technical language; it is thus accessible to every believer. The writing style is clear and straightforward. Whether one is a cessationist or a continuationist they can read this book and profit from it. It will both inform the reader's mind, and I dare say stir his or her heart to have a greater experience of the Holy Spirit in their life: a

biblical experience of the Holy Spirit. A point Keener makes in a couple of places in the book is that we should not be content to see our experience of the Spirit as normal, rather, we should seek to conform our experience of the Spirit to what we find in the scriptures. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone who is seeking a greater knowledge about the Holy Spirit, His nature and His works. I do hope that *Gift & Giver* will enjoy widespread circulation in Indonesia (and elsewhere). It is an excellent resource for the church.