

## Slain in the Spirit

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**S**cene #1: A jungle village in a dirt clearing with primitive huts and native inhabitants in scanty clothing.

At night the people gather around the community fire and begin to chant and beat their drums. The witch doctor slices open his flesh, calls upon his gods and begins to gyrate wildly as he is “possessed.” He encourages the villagers to let the spirits from beyond come into their bodies. They close their eyes, wave their hands and dance in the flickering firelight.

Their movements grow faster, their bodies jerk and their eyes roll back in their sockets. Finally all control is lost and the worshipers collapse in a frenzy.

Observing such a ceremony, the typical Westerner shakes his head and thinks, “What ignorant, superstitious savages!”

**Scene #2:** A modern church building seating hundreds of well dressed, middle class Americans.

The preacher begins to prance across the stage, shouting into the microphone and raising the emotional atmosphere to a fever pitch. “The Spirit is among us!” he yells and begins to chant in unintelligible sounds.

The choir claps and shouts, the music blares and some begin weeping and calling out to God. The preacher knocks a nearly catatonic worshiper in the forehead and screams “Down!” She falls to the floor in violent spasms. The scene is repeated over and over until most in the auditorium are laying in dazed heaps.

The same Westerner, exhausted from the emotional tumult, drives home thinking, “It was a good service; many of the brothers and sisters were *slain in the Spirit tonight!*”

Primitive superstition is not confined to the jungle. Americans fancy themselves to be educated and enlightened while falling victim to voodoo-like rituals camouflaged in Christian terminology.

The term “slain in the Spirit” is not Biblical. It has been concocted to describe an event or state that is likewise non-Biblical. There simply is no evidence of the Holy Spirit taking control of people, convulsing them, and turning a worship service into bedlam. Where does the NT describe such commotion and chaos?

Agabus spoke prophecy (Ac 21:10-11); Peter received a vision (Ac 10:9-19); Stephen defended the truth (Ac 6:8-10) and the apostles were all baptized in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Ac 2:1-11). But none of them under the influence of the Holy Spirit displayed such out-of-control behavior. To the contrary, Paul commanded that all spiritual gifts be exercised “*decently and in order*” (1 Cor 14:40).

We do not have to know all the psychological forces at work in these events. It is enough to know it is *not* God’s Holy Spirit at work. If we abandon the Spirit’s revelation – the Scriptures – we leave ourselves vulnerable to every myth, experience, emotion and claim that comes down the pike. “*Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*” (Eph 5:17).