

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The Importance of the Baptism of the Spirit

Sadly the baptism of the Spirit has been either ignored or abused too much. The importance of the Baptism of the Spirit is self-evident because it is included in all four Gospels with other important doctrine such as His crucifixion and resurrection; not even the Sermon on the Mount is included in all four Gospels. In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist said, *"I [John the Baptist] indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."* A similar verse is found in Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, and John 1:33 where John the Baptist says he baptized in water, but that Jesus will baptize in the Spirit. Jesus not only agrees with John the Baptist in Acts 1:4-5, but says exactly the same thing about John baptizing in water and Himself baptizing in the Spirit. The Baptism of the Spirit was so important that Jesus told the disciples to wait and not leave Jerusalem until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:48-49). In Acts 1:8 Jesus continues with why the baptism of the Spirit is so important, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* The Greek word for power is *dunamis* which means an internal power coming from within by virtue of its nature. In other words, Jesus is telling us that the Baptism of the Spirit will give us His Spirit's power which will make us effective witnesses for serving Christ. We see this power very clearly in the life of Peter when prior to the death of Jesus Peter cursed Jesus three times and then after baptism of the Spirit, Peter spoke with boldness in Acts 4:8-13. It is important to note that *dunamis* is not the same as authority, the Greek word for authority is *exousia*. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus gave His *exousia* to His disciples. There are many unsaved people trying to accomplish things based on just authority or power but rarely both. Jesus gave us both His authority (from the Father) and His power (through the Spirit) to make disciples who make disciples who form the Body of Christ.

Three Prepositions

In John 14:17 Jesus says, *"...but you know Him [the Holy Spirit], for He dwells with you and will be in you."* The Greek word for 'with' is 'para', and the Greek word for 'in' is 'en'. Also note the 'with' part of the Holy Spirit is present tense and the 'in' part is future tense, as in it hasn't happened yet. This brings us to John 20 where the 'in' part of the Holy Spirit happens in verses 21 through 23 when Jesus breathes on them and says, *"Receive the Holy Spirit."* Then in Acts 1:8 Jesus says, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."* The Greek word for 'upon' is 'epi'.

The reason I point out that the Greek also had three different prepositions is to show that this isn't just a translation thing, but that Jesus really did use three different prepositions to delineate between three different experiences with the Holy Spirit. In essence these three prepositions define three relationships with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is first 'with' you tapping you on the shoulder and tugging on your heart with conviction leading you to Jesus (John 16:8, 13). Next the Holy Spirit is 'in' you at salvation (Rom 8:9, 1 Cor 6:19-20). Then the Spirit comes upon one with power when Jesus baptizes in the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Five Examples of the Baptism of the Spirit with Observations

	Who	Where	Tongues	Laid Hands	Water Before
Acts 2:1-4	Jews at Pentecost	Jerusalem	Yes	No	Yes
- After Pentecost -					
Acts 8:14-17	Samaritans: Half Jew/Gentile	Samaria	No	Yes	Yes
Acts 9:17-18	An unbelieving Jew	Damascus	No	Yes	No
Acts 10:44-48	Gentiles	Judea	Yes	No	No
Acts 19:1-7	Probably Gentiles	Greece	Yes	Yes	Yes

From the five examples above we can make the following observations:

1. There was an order to who was baptized in the Spirit as first the Jews, then the Samaritans (who are half Jew and half Gentile) and then the Gentiles were Baptized in the Spirit. Romans 1:16 and 2:10 both say, *“salvation came to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”*
2. The Baptism of the Spirit starts first in Jerusalem which is in Judea, then to Samaria, then to the ends of the earth. This is the same order which Jesus stated in Acts 1:8.
3. In two of the five examples it is not recorded that those Baptized in the Spirit spoke in tongues. 1 Cor 12:30 tells us plainly that not everyone in the body will speak in tongues, while Luke 11:13 tells us the Father will give the Holy Spirit to all who ask.
4. In two of the five examples it is recorded that people were baptized in the Spirit prior to being baptized in water.
5. In two of the five examples it is recorded that people did not lay hands on those Baptized in the Spirit.
6. So while we see order in points 1 and 2, we also see that in points 3, 4 and 5 there is no formula either.
7. The Baptism of the Spirit is not a science. There is no 'one way' to be baptized in the Spirit.
8. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is an event in time, not a process like sanctification.

9. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a separate work from baptism in water. Clearly from the observations above we cannot say that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit automatically happens at water baptism, in fact, the two don't happen at the same time in any of the five examples! Jesus is the only example in Scripture where water baptism happened at the same time as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

There are some who have said that we cannot determine sound doctrine from the book of Acts and you will note that all of the observations above are from Acts. However, we know that 2 Timothy 3:16 says, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."* 2 Timothy 3:16 does not allow us to ignore the book of Acts as being equally profitable for doctrine as any other book in the Bible.

More Observations about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit from More Scripture:

1. Jesus told His disciples to be Baptized in the Spirit (Luke 24:48-49; Acts 1:4-5, 8). That makes it commandment that we are to follow.
2. Isaiah 40:3 tells us that John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus. Water baptism (repentance) is a physical preparation for spiritual baptism which gives power to serve as a witness for Christ.
3. In Acts 5:32 Peter said that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God. Later, in Acts 10:2 we see that Cornelius (who was a Gentile) was, *"a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God."* Peter got to see first hand that his words in Acts 5:32 applied not just to obedient Jews, but also to obedient Gentiles in Acts 10:44-48.
4. The baptism of the Spirit is that which marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Just as all four Gospels record that Jesus came to baptize others in the Spirit...all four Gospels also record a verse that basically says that...the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove. Those four verses are Matt 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22 and John 1:32. The key words here are upon (which is the same Greek word *epi* used in the Baptism of the Spirit examples which means upon) and the word like. The word like (*hosei* in the Greek) is a key word because this means that an actual dove did NOT land upon Jesus as most are taught to believe. The Greek word *hosei* is a metaphoric word which means like or as. In other words the Holy Spirit, who is like a dove, is that which descended upon Jesus, not a dove. Jesus was baptized in water and immediately after coming out of the water was then baptized in the Spirit.
5. Disciples of Christ must be taught about the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12:1).
6. The gift of the Holy Spirit is for every disciple in every age. (Acts 2:38-39).
7. The Baptism of the Spirit is not the same as being filled with the Holy Spirit since Peter and Paul were said to be filled with the Holy Spirit on several different occasions after they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8, 31 and Acts 13:9, 52).

8. In the story of Sampson the author uses a similar phrase ‘the Spirit of God came upon Sampson’, several times right before Sampson did his great feats of strength. The story of Sampson, is a fore shadow of the power the Spirit will give to us in the 'upon' relationship.
9. 1 Samuel 16:13-14 says, “*...and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward...But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul...*” Thus David is a great picture book of a life led by the Spirit after being baptized in the Spirit and is contrasted with the life of Saul who was not Baptized in the Spirit.

If we have learned anything we’ve learned that there is no formula on how Jesus chooses to baptize in the Holy Spirit. For example, from the observations we have made we cannot make the conclusion that the Baptism of the Spirit always happens at salvation. Nor can we conclude that Baptism of the Spirit always happens after salvation.

How do I know if I have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

- Ask Jesus if He has baptized you in His Holy Spirit.
- Is there power from the Holy Spirit in your work and service for the Lord and His Kingdom? Ask God’s people around you to answer this question about you.
- Have you experience a calling from God? A calling is often best described as a strong stirring in your heart that often is measured in months not days.
- How present is the fruit of the Spirit in your life and service for the Lord? Such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, meekness, long-suffering. Fruits of the Spirit most certainly are present at salvation, but are typically even more present after Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Ask God’s people around you to answer this question about you.
- Do you remember a point in your life when you started receiving or experiencing more of the manifestation of the Spirit as listed in 1 Cor 12:4-10?

Things a Person can do to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

- Repent of your sins and be baptized in water (Matt 3:11).
- Obey the commands and teachings of Jesus Christ (Acts 5:32).
- Ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5 and Luke 11:13).
- Receive the Holy Spirit by faith (Galatians 3:2).
- Ask one or two others who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit to lay their hands on you and ask Jesus with you to baptize you in the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-15; 19:6).

The two questions above are NOT checklists, more like helpful reminders. Don’t forget that the Lord does things in His timing not ours. Seek Him in prayer.