

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

20 Are You Baptised With The Holy Spirit?

Scripture Reading

Acts 2:1 – 39

The Holy Spirit Is...

Last time we looked at who the Holy Spirit is and how He glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ in the world (John 16:13 – 15). This evening we are going to consider a term that often causes confusion. We are going to think about what it means to be baptised with the Spirit.

The Baptism Of The Spirit Promised

Long ago God promised that a day would come when He would pour out His Holy Spirit upon His people.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."

Ezekiel 36:25 – 27

"For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring;"

Isaiah 44:3

"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days."

Joel 2:28 – 29

Before His ascension Jesus confirmed that the fulfilment of that promise was very near and described it as being "baptised with the Holy Spirit."

"For John truly baptised with water, but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 1:5

Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, Peter confirmed that the pouring out of the Spirit that day was indeed the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy.

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Acts 2:38 – 39

The Baptism Of The Spirit Is The Work Of Christ

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is given by the Lord Jesus.

"I indeed baptise 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 will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Matthew 3:11

"I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptise with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptises with the Holy Spirit.'

John 1:33

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."

John 16:7

"...the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

Titus 3:6

"Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear."

Acts 2:33

The Spirit is sent by the risen, exalted Lord Jesus.

The Baptism Of The Spirit Is Received By Every Believer

Since Pentecost the baptism of the Spirit has been received by every believer at the time when he or she was born again. There is no such thing as a believer who has not received the Spirit of God.

"For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:13

"Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:5

New Testament Examples Of The Baptism Of The Spirit

We have only four examples of people being baptised with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. All four are recorded in the book of Acts and all four mark key points in the fulfilment of God's promise to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh.

The day of Pentecost was the first occasion on which God's Spirit came upon the church of Christ.

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"

Acts 2:1 – 4

Acts chapter 8 records the first outpouring of the Spirit in Samaria: evidence that the church of Christ upon which God's Spirit is poured out extends to include not only Jews but also Samaritans.

"Who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."

Acts 8:15 – 17

In Acts 10 Cornelius and his friends and relations received the Holy Spirit. This too was a highly significant first for it marked the extension of the church to Gentiles. On this occasion the coming of the Holy Spirit was associated with their conversion.

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also."

Acts 10:44 – 45

Similarly the baptism with the Spirit of the Ephesian believers in Acts 19 followed immediately on their conversion to faith in Christ. Again it marked a significant development in the history of the church. The people involved were followers of John the Baptist. John's disciples could have thought of themselves as a separate and independent sect but when the Spirit came upon them in this way it was clear that the Lord Jesus had received them into His church in the same way as He had received those who were present on the day of Pentecost, the believers in Samaria and the Gentiles gathered in the home of Cornelius.

"He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptised?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John

indeed baptised with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard *this*, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied."

Acts 19:2 – 6

Taken together these four accounts are a powerful demonstration that the glorified Lord Jesus Christ welcomes men and women of all races and social backgrounds into His church on an equal footing. Luke merely records the events leaving Paul to explain their significance which he does in one sentence.

"For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:13

So Why The Confusion?

Only seven passages in the New Testament, all of which we have looked at, refer specifically to baptism with the Holy Spirit. Five predict that Jesus will baptise with the Spirit, one, in the book of Acts, tells what happened when some people were baptised with the Spirit and only one, 1 Corinthians 12:13, is a teaching passage giving us our doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit.

Most of the older textbooks of systematic theology have very little to say about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The fact is that until relatively recent times there was little that needed to be said. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the initial coming of the Holy Spirit upon a new believer in fulfilment of God's promise to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. It is inevitably bound up with salvation: a necessary part of it for it is by the Spirit that we are united to Christ and made alive in Him.

However with the rise of Pentecostalism and, later, the advent of the Charismatic Movement in the last century baptism in the Holy Spirit became a hot issue.

There is a widely held view, sometimes referred to as the doctrine of subsequence, which says that at conversion Christians only receive the Holy Spirit in a limited sense. They therefore need to earnestly seek the baptism of the Spirit in order to move to a higher level of spiritual life characterised by new motivation and power and often (always according to some) evidenced by speaking in tongues.

From what we have learned this evening it should be clear that this doctrine is wrong. It depends upon taking the accounts in Acts as setting the norm for every believer but we are told nowhere that they should. Even the four accounts in Acts contradict it. In Acts 10 and 19 believers were baptised in the Spirit at the moment of belief, not after. In Acts 8 there is no record of those who received the Holy Spirit having spoken in tongues. Neither are we told anywhere that baptism with the Spirit is something to be sought: the disciples were not told to seek baptism in the Spirit but to wait for it and in Acts 2 that is what we find them doing. In Acts 8, 10 and 19 no seeking is mentioned. Finally, and perhaps most convincingly, this doctrine of subsequence is at odds with 1 Corinthians 12:13, the only "teaching" passage that deals with the subject.

Baptised?

So then, Spirit baptism brings every believer into a vital union with Christ. The implication of the very term is that the Lord Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit so freely that we are immersed in Him and it is that immersion that connects us with Him and with one another.

Here is a question to consider. What do you think should be the practical and observable results of being baptised with the Holy Spirit?

Next Week

Next Week we will look at another term that is commonly misunderstood. Indeed it is often confused with the one we have been thinking about this evening. We will ask what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?