

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Introduction

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? . . . no, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2). This was the exchange between the apostle Paul and some disciples he met at Ephesus. Even though these disciples believed the gospel message, the Holy Spirit had not come upon them, i.e., they had not been baptized in the Spirit. Paul ministered to them, baptized them in water as a sign of their receiving Jesus Christ, laid hands on them in prayer, and they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Following this, they were [speaking in tongues](#) and prophesying (Acts 19:1-7). This was well after the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) where followers of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit, with the same result. God’s Spirit empowered their lives.

Like the Ephesian disciples of many years ago, many Christ followers today do not know about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, either because they have not heard preaching or teaching on it or they are hesitant to explore this dimension of the Christian experience, believing it was meant only for believers in the first century when the Church was just beginning to grow and flourish. But there is nothing in the New Testament, in the words of Jesus, in the gospel narratives or the letters of Paul and others that indicates the baptism or infilling of the Holy Spirit was only meant for the Church in the first century.

Why is it needed and for whom is it intended?

The need for the baptism in the Holy Spirit was clearly evident when Jesus was with his twelve disciples. Thomas doubted. Peter denied. Judas betrayed. Some who heard the message of Jesus and believed were weak in their faith and lacked guidance in their spiritual journeys. Right before Jesus ascended into heaven, Jesus said this to his disciples,

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit** . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all

Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:4-8) (*emphasis added*).

Indeed, as recorded in **Acts 2**, that happened just as Jesus said it would. Three thousand people became followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost. Notice, however, that the power and work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers would impact not only Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, but it would extend to the *ends of the earth*, i.e., to places and people well beyond those believers in that day and time. Peter declared it another way,

“repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (salvation, rebirth). And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Spirit empowerment). The promise is for you and your children and for all who are *far off* – for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39) (*emphasis added*).

Peter was saying that the promise of being baptized in the Holy Spirit would well beyond their time and he said it was “for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Even Peter did not realize how far, as God’s Spirit has indwelt countless believers on all seven continents. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was not just an early Church phenomenon, it was the power source for growing and sustaining the Church. The Church would not have grown to be what it is today without it.

Sadly, there are some ministers of the Gospel today who discourage their people from being filled with the Holy Spirit and utilizing the [Gifts of the Holy Spirit](#), declaring its power and the gifts as irrelevant and unnecessary for Christian life in the 21st century. With all that is going on in the world today, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is needed now more than ever. Christians are being challenged and, in some places, facing more persecution than ever before. The strength and anointing of the Holy Spirit would sustain them in their journey.

What Does it Provide?

At the Last Supper, with precious little time remaining with His disciples before he was arrested and crucified, Jesus shared with His disciples what was most important about the ministry upon which they were about to embark. **John chapters 13-17** should be read for the details. The prominent emphasis of Jesus was the *baptism of the Holy Spirit* and what it would provide them. Jesus said,

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.

The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:15-17) (emphasis added).

They and all believers who followed Jesus would be in a position to have the very Spirit of God living *within* them. The baptism of the Holy Spirit means having an overflow of God from your life. It is not just having God *walk with you*, it is God living *in you* and flowing out in powerful ways.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would, in general, “convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment . . .” (John 16:8-11) (emphasis added). Jesus also shared what the baptism in the Holy Spirit would specifically do for believers. It would:

Empower them to be witnesses (Acts 1:8). Does anyone not need this? We need more spiritual power to do the work God has called us to do.

Teach them all things and remind them of truth when they needed it (John 14:25-26). The Holy Spirit would help them understand scripture and jog their memories about spiritual truth at times when they needed it most.

Guide them into all truth (John 16:12-15). Believers of all generations have needed guidance. God’s Spirit living within us provides it for every aspect of our lives.

Bear fruit through their ministry, bringing others to Christ (John 15:1-5). Without the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

To have a better understanding of the important matters Jesus shared with His disciples at the Last Supper, read and study what is called the Olivet Discourse from John 13:1–17:26. So, how do we receive this precious gift?

Receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit

The initial dose of God’s Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost without anyone asking because it was God’s will to do so. It was the jump-start of the Christian faith. After that, with most recorded instances in the New Testament, persons *asked* for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and received it, most always with the ‘laying on of hands,’ prayer, and signs following, that included speaking in tongues, and gifts of the

Spirit. Here are some good passages to read – **Acts 4:23-33; Acts 8:14-17; Acts 10:44-48; and Acts 19:1-7.**

Today some ministers pray, with ‘laying on of hands,’ for newly-water baptized believers to receive the Holy Spirit. Other new believers are not prayed for that way but discover what the Bible says about the baptism in the Holy Spirit when they read the scriptures highlighted in this article or ones like it. Realizing what an impact the Holy Spirit makes on believers, they open their hearts and **ask God** for the infilling of the Spirit or they ask someone to pray for them. Signs most always follow.

Do you want to have more of God’s power for your faith journey? Do you want to be taught and guided by God’s Spirit living in you? Do you want to bear more fruit as a witness for Jesus Christ?

We suggest this:

Pray alone or have someone or several others lay hands on you and pray.

Reaffirm your faith in Jesus as Savior, that Jesus was raised from the dead and that Jesus is Lord.

Open your heart and tell God you need His Spirit to overflow in your life.
Ask Him to baptize you in the Spirit.

God will be faithful if you **ask**. James said, “**you have not because you ask not**” (**James 4:2**) and “**ask in faith, nothing doubting**” (**James 1:6**). To confirm your experience, we encourage you to share what happened with a pastor or a Spirit-filled believer.

Other things to know

The baptism of the Holy Spirit does not save you. Praying the [sinner’s prayer](#), confessing sin, and receiving Jesus as Savior does. The baptism of the Holy Spirit empowers you and makes your relationship with God stronger.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit cannot be purchased nor is it intended for personal benefit or gain. **Acts 8:9-24** records the story of Simon the sorcerer, a man who made his living as a magician in the city of Samaria. Simon, along with many others, believed the preaching of Philip and were baptized in water. Peter and John joined Philip, laid hands on the new believers, with all of them receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw this ‘laying on of hands’ by disciples of Jesus, he offered Peter and

John money, thinking he could have the power to lay hands on and dispense the Holy Spirit, presumably to enhance his revenue as a magician. Peter rebuked Simon saying, “thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee. For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:20-23).

Over the centuries, many have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, serving God in new and powerful ways. Many Protestant and Catholic churches have Spirit-filled believers in their midst. To preach and teach this aspect of the Christian faith more boldly and practice the [gifts of the Spirit](#) openly, Pentecostal and charismatic denominations and congregations have come into existence since the day of Pentecost. Like some of the early churches cautioned by the apostle Paul for excess or abuse of the gifts of the Spirit in worship, some congregations today could be cautioned for the same types of excess or abuse, e.g., speaking in tongues without interpretation, not entertaining prophecy more, allowing behavior that may not necessarily be from the Spirit. To provide balance, though, many congregations today should be urged to be more open to the move of the Holy Spirit and to the gifts God has given. Excess or abuse of the work of the Holy Spirit in some worship settings does not invalidate it for the entire body of Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit and a balanced use of the gifts of the Spirit are needed in the life of all individual believers and congregations.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is serious. It is what Jesus said was the only sin that could not be forgiven. The context of Jesus’ statement was the Pharisees of Jesus’ day attributing a miracles of Jesus to an impure spirit or the devil (Mark 3:22-30 and Matthew 12:22-32). Some believe this blasphemy could only occur when Jesus walked the earth because now he is seated in the heavenly places and cannot be impugned. However, in the Matthew version of this account, Jesus says that blasphemy against the Son of Man (Jesus) can be forgiven, but “anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matthew 12:32). Though Jesus is bodily in heaven, the Holy Spirit is doing work in and among us today on the earth. If we reject the work of the Holy Spirit as evil or useless, we may be treading on dangerous ground. For more detail, you are encouraged to read [Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit](#) and hesitate saying anything negative about how the Holy Spirit may be working in the lives of others.

This is an introduction on the subject of [Baptism in the Holy Spirit](#). Here are a few other resources you may wish to explore:

[Baptism in the Holy Spirit \(In-Depth Study\) – The Biblical Foundation](#)

[69 Bible verses about Baptism Of The Holy Spirit \(knowing-jesus.com\)](#)

[What is baptism in the Holy Spirit? | Baptism of the Holy Spirit | carm.org](#)

[What the Bible Says About Baptism in the Holy Spirit - Bible Resources](#)

[Assemblies of God \(USA\) Official Web Site | Baptism in the Holy Spirit \(ag.org\)](#)

[70 Functions of the Holy Spirit \(revtrev.com\)](#)