

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

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The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a divine work accomplished in the church age in relation to **all** believers. It is **NOT** mentioned in the Old Testament.

Description

Seven passages in the New Testament directly mention the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (**Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Jn 1:33; Acts 1:5; 1 Cor.12:13**). There are other passages that refer to Spirit baptism (Rom.6:3-4; Gal.3:26-28; Eph. 4:5; Colo.2:12).¹

The seven primary verses fall into three categories²:

1. **Prophetic/Predictive:** John the Baptist and Jesus Christ predicted that it would happen in the future. All four Gospels mention its first prediction by John the Baptist (**Matt.3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Jn.1:33**). On the day of His ascension, Jesus announced to His disciples that they “shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5), a reference to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

All these predictions by John the Baptist and Jesus were fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down and baptized/immersed the believers into the body of Christ. Thus, it was the birthday of the church. The birthday gift from God was the Spirit of God Himself who came to dwell permanently in the heart of every believer.

2. **Historical:** This is a declaration by Peter (**Acts 11:15-17**). Here Peter recounted the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius and his household

¹ Some people see these passages as referring to water baptism.

² I would encourage the reader to carefully examine all these verses for a clear understanding of the topic discussed here.

(Acts 10:34-45) to the church in Jerusalem. Peter explicitly tied the falling of the Holy Spirit in Caesarea at the household of Cornelius to the events of Pentecost. He witnessed the similarity between the two events. God had done for the Gentiles in Cornelius' house the same as He has done for Jews at Pentecost. "...the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15); "The beginning" points to the beginning of the church on the Day of Pentecost. Peter also recalled the promise of the Lord about the Holy Spirit baptism – "And I remembered the word of the Lord ".... but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:16; 1:5). Peter looks back to the historical event of Pentecost and states that what happened on that day was indeed the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. At Cornelius' house Peter saw the same phenomenon as it was on the Day of Pentecost. It was a way to demonstrate to the Jewish Christians (like Peter) that the Holy Spirit had come to the Gentiles just as He had to them.

3. **Doctrinal:** The key passage in all of Scripture on this subject is **1Cor.12:13**. Here, Paul doctrinally explains the meaning of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor.12:13).

Definition

In light of this verse, let me give you a simple definition of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the means through which a believer is placed into the body of Christ (the church) and into living union with all true believers in the present age.*

The doctrinal passage brings out the true meaning of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. We will consider **some vital truths** concerning the Baptism of the Holy Spirit based on this key verse:

1. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is **unique to this church age** which began at Pentecost (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit didn't baptize people in the Old Testament, since there was no church in the Old Testament.
2. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit **includes all believers in this age**. We were **all** baptized. It is a spiritual reality that marks every believer in this church age. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that only some believers have been baptized in the Spirit. It is not described as a special experience of the spiritually elite group.
3. The tense of the verb indicates a past action – “we **were** all baptized.” It is something all believers have experienced.
4. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit **places every believer “into” one body**, the church. The Greek preposition *eis* (“into”) describes the result of the process; we are placed “into” the body of Christ and have been made members of that body.
5. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit brings believers **into union with Christ and into union with other believers in the body of Christ**. There is absolutely no distinction between Jews, Gentiles, slaves, free people, men, women – all come into union with one another.
6. **It is never commanded**. This is work done to the believer and not by the believer. Hence it is not an emotional experience. There is no suggestion in the Word of God that we should seek after the experience of the Baptism of the Spirit.
7. **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs simultaneously with salvation**. What took place at Pentecost historically was realized at our conversion. It is not a post-conversion experience. It is at the very moment of our salvation that we are placed into the body of Christ. Paul did not teach the *doctrine of subsequence* – the notion that one gets salvation at one point and the Baptism of the Spirit later as a second blessing or special experience.³

³The unscriptural Charismatic/Pentecostal *doctrine of subsequence* teaches that at conversion Christians get the Holy Spirit only in a limited sense, and therefore, they need to seek Spirit baptism as a special experience to move to a higher level of spiritual life.

8. It is an unrepeated work of God. It is done once and for all at the moment of salvation. You get it once, and you never need it again. One Spirit Baptism has established the one Church, once and for all.

Conclusion

There is no need for confusion, controversy, or diverse opinion on the doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit if you are willing to seriously study its truth from the Word of God. Let us not gauge the truth by what we “feel” or our personal experience, rather than Scripture.

Baptism of the Spirit, filling of the Spirit, sealing of the Spirit, indwelling of the Spirit, and anointing of the Spirit are all separate divine works. Many try to equate them, but the biblical evidence contrasts them. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit must be distinguished from the other works of the Spirit. Don't get them mixed up.