

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a divine work accomplished only in the church age. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament. There are 11 references in the New Testament to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but only four persons referred to it by name: Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul.

Predicted by John the Baptist

All four gospel writers attributed the first mention of the baptism in the Holy Spirit to John the Baptist. The forerunner predicted that the coming Messiah would baptize repentant Jews with the Holy Spirit. According to John, Jesus Christ would be the baptizer and the Holy Spirit would be the element or sphere of the baptism. In his ministry John the Baptist was the baptizer and water was the element of the baptism. John also said the baptism in the Holy Spirit was a future event. John the Baptist knew that Jesus Christ is the son of God who would baptize believers in the Holy Spirit. God the Father informed John that the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan River identified Jesus as the Spirit baptizer.

Guaranteed by Jesus Christ

It is important to realize that Jesus Christ did not baptize anyone in the Holy Spirit during his earthly ministry. In fact, he did not mention the baptism in the Holy Spirit in his teaching before the crucifixion. On the day of his physical ascension into heaven he announced to the 11 apostles that John had truly baptized with water, *“but that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from then”*. The period of days turned out to be 10. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit filled the room where the apostles were sitting. They were “in the Spirit” or baptized with him. Thus the predictions of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were first fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, beginning the church age.

Declared by Peter

Peter recounted the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius and his household to the church in Jerusalem. He said that their experience was the same as that of the apostles on the day of

Pentecost. Baptism in the Holy Spirit occurred at the very moment they believed and repented. Their experience, rather than that of the apostles, is the norm for believers during this church age. The apostles had to wait for the events of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension to occur before they could experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit. For them, it was a post conversion experience, but their experience was transitional, because it was connected to Jesus' ministry while he was on the earth.

Defined by Paul

Paul clearly referred to the baptism in the Holy Spirit once. He mentioned it four other times, but those passages are disputed. Many people believe those passages refer to water baptism only. Some who hold this view believe in baptismal regeneration, and others stress the importance of believers' baptism almost to the neglect of spirit baptism. Of course, Paul did refer to water baptism. However, the five passages where he did so are in contexts that discuss spiritual realities which are common to *all* believers. If these other verses are restricted to participants in water baptism only, then a great multitude of believers who have not yet received water baptism would be eliminated from the enjoyment of the spiritual blessings mentioned in those verses.

What, then, does the baptism in the Holy Spirit accomplish in each believer?

- A) It identifies every believer with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. Every believer is in Christ and Christ is in every believer. We are in Him, one in Him, and united in Him forever.**

Because Christ is in us, we have power to become Christ-like in our daily living. We can have victory over the sinful disposition that still affects our human experience. Our positional oneness in Christ and His presence in us have been made possible by the baptism in the Holy Spirit. God positionally views us as being in Christ. Thus when Jesus Christ died and rose again, believers positionally died and rose again in Him and with Him. Just as sin and death do not have dominion over Him, neither do they have dominion over believers.

On the other hand, the unsaved are in Adam and therefore positionally condemned. But when a person is saved, he or she is placed in Christ, and therefore positionally justified.

Should believers continue to practice sin once they are saved? *Certainly not*, to quote Paul. As he wrote, “*how shall we who died to sin live any longer in it*”? Our death to sin occurred through our positional presence in Christ accomplished by the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

This positional identification is true of all believers. Unfortunately, many Christians are not aware of this truth. Many do not appropriate by faith the victory over sin that Christ won for them. Having won that victory, we must believe it and act appropriately.

B) It places every believer into the spiritual body of Christ which is the true church.

After Christ died and rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven where he began his headship over the church which is his body. During his earthly ministry Christ had said he would build his church. There are several key features found in that prediction. First, Christ is the builder. Second, the building would take place in the future. In fact, it was in that chapter that Jesus spoke for the first time about his intention to die and rise again. Third, the church would be His. Fourth, the church is singular. Local churches should manifest the essence of the one true universal church. The Greek word for church literally means “called out ones”. Therefore during this church age, which is the period between the day of Pentecost and the rapture, Christ is calling out a redeemed group, formed from believing Jews and believing Gentiles. We who have been called by God to salvation are placed into the body of Christ, namely the true church, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Let’s summarize some key biblical truths regarding the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

First, all believers have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that only some believers have been baptized in the Spirit. This baptism occurs when a person accepts and confesses Jesus Christ as his or her personal savior.

Second, this baptism places every believer into one body, the true church. The goal of spirit baptism is positional oneness within the called out group in this church age. All church age believers are in the church. There are no believers outside the spiritual body of Christ.

Third, normal racial, social, and sexual distinctions are irrelevant within the body of Christ. Jews and Greeks are positionally one in the church. So are slaves and free citizens. And so are males and females.

Fourth, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a work that Christ does for us. It is not an experience we should seek after conversion. It is an automatic part of being born again.

Fifth, the baptism in the spirit establishes our sphere of ministry within the true church. Although we as believers are one in our spiritual position in the body, we have different functions or ministries to perform. Our spiritual gifts then become a part of our Christian life.

Sixth, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is not evidenced by speaking in tongues.

C) It is a spiritual reality that marks every believer in this church age

The spiritual oneness created by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer is true whether believers live in accord with that truth or not. That being said, the daily practices of believers should display their spiritual position. What is the unity of the Spirit? Paul explained *“there is one body and one Spirit just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and one father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* In these verses Paul uses the word **one** seven times to point out seven realities that mark the spiritual position of every believer.

First, we believers are all in one body, the true church.

Second, we are all indwelt by one Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Third, we all have one hope, the hope of being like Jesus Christ when he returns to rapture the church.

Fourth, we all have one Lord, Jesus Christ, the crucified, resurrected, ascended head of the church.

Fifth, we all have one faith, the belief in the deity and redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Sixth, we were all marked by one baptism, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which placed us into Christ and his body, the church.

Seventh, we all have one God and one Father, the sovereign ruler of our lives.

It should be noted here that the words *“one baptism”* must refer to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It cannot refer to water baptism because not all Christians have been baptized in water and for those who have, that baptism has taken place in many different forms. For example, some were sprinkled with water as infants whereas others have been fully immersed as adults. Water baptism is not a singular reality true of ***all*** believers, although Jesus commanded it as an external expression of an internal reality, namely having been born again. Taken together with the six other spiritual realities mentioned in these verses, the *“one baptism”* must also be true of all believers. It is part of the unity of the Spirit, which Paul was referring to.

Filling of the Holy Spirit

Does the Holy Spirit fill a believer from outside or from within him? Since the Spirit began to dwell within a believer at conversion, He must consequently fill the believer from within. The command to be filled with the Spirit is stated in Ephesians 5:18: *“and do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the spirit.”* The second part of that verse literally reads: *“be you (plural) filled in the spirit”*. Some important observations must be noted:

First, believers can either obey or disobey this command. It is up to them.

Second, we are never commanded to ask or pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. Rather we are commanded to be obedient. As incredible as it may seem, there is not a single reference in the New Testament that directs believers to ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. There are, however, three direct commands that involve the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. If these commands are obeyed, we are filled or controlled by the Spirit. More on that later.

Third, believers do not fill themselves, nor do they actively command the Spirit to fill them. The proper translation of the verb meaning *“filled”* in Ephesians 5:18 is properly interpreted to mean that we are acted upon by Him. Yet *we* are active when we obey and yield to Him.

Fourth, we must be filled with the Spirit over and over. The verb is in the present tense, and it can be translated as being continuously filled. Although a believer may consciously yield himself to the Holy Spirit for the very first time during a crisis, that active submission must be repeated daily. It is possible to be filled with the spirit on Sunday and not be filled on Monday. Each Christian should ask himself or herself, *“am I at this moment spiritually clean and submissive to the leadership of the Spirit”*?

Fifth, we are filled with the Spirit when we are obedient to the word of God. Paul wrote that we are to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom. The Holy Spirit fills us when we understand and apply the Scriptures to our lives. The Spirit always works according to the Scriptures, never apart from them.

Sixth, we are *“being filled”* with the Spirit when we are controlled by Him. As a simple illustration, think of a person who is intoxicated. You will often see a person under the influence of alcohol do things that they would not do when they are sober. They were under the influence or control of the alcohol in their bodies. Paul used this simple example to illustrate the filling of the Spirit. The Spirit wants to influence us in every area of our lives -

mentally, emotionally, vocationally, sexually and relationally. He seeks to be in control as we apply the Scriptures to each area of our lives. When we are filled with the Spirit then, we will do things that we would not ordinarily do in our fallen human nature: i.e.; “in the flesh”.

The three direct commands involving the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit:

In the second observation above, I stated that nowhere in the New Testament are believers commanded to ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I did, however, state that there are three scriptural commands given to believers regarding the filling of the Holy Spirit.

1.) *Walk in the Spirit.* “*Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*”

The verb walk is in the present tense, indicating a continuous walk. It could be translated, “keep on walking”. The essence of a Spirit filled walk is dependence and enablement. No believer has the capacity within himself to become what God wants him to be. No one is sufficient in himself to do what God wants him to do. To live physically, we need air. We must be in the air and the air must be in us. Fish must be in water to stay alive. If you take a fish out of the water and place it on a table, it will flop around helplessly until it dies. Its natural habitat is water, not air. So it is with us. The supernatural habitat for successful Christian living is in the Holy Spirit. We must depend on Him for our spiritual lives and strength.

2.) *Don’t grieve the Spirit.* “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*”

Christians grieve the Holy Spirit when we deliberately sin. Conversely, we delight Him when we live in holiness. If we do in fact grieve Him, we must seek immediate restoration to fellowship through repentance and confession of sin. (I John 1:9) God wants us “*to be holy just as He is holy.*” We should desire ***not*** to sin. How can we achieve such lofty goals? First, we must study and apply the word of God to our lives. As the psalmist testified: “*your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*” Secondly, we must resist the daily temptations of sin by the help of the Spirit. Third, we must prayerfully attempt to glorify God in all that we say and do.

3.) *Don’t quench the Spirit.* Paul stated it as simply as that: “*do not quench the Spirit.*”

We quench the Spirit when we resist His attempts to produce Christ-likeness in us. In essence, the act of quenching Him is rooted in selfishness. When we purposely disregard His prompting, leading, or directives, we have reverted back to our fallen human nature; i.e. the flesh. (*We revert back to wanting things our way*)

We must desire to do the will of God through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit even before we know what it is. It's this simple; we must decide to do it because of our love for the Lord. In submitting to God's will, we are expressing our gratitude for his gracious mercy. We will not quench him if we obey Paul's appeal to us in Romans 12:1-2: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

In summary, dependence, cleanliness, and yieldedness are necessary to achieve a Spirit-filled, Spirit-directed life. Those conditions must be met daily. Simply put, a believer is spiritual when he is yielded to the Holy Spirit; he is carnal (fleshly) when he is not yielded to him. A believer chooses each day and by each moment whether to yield himself to the Spirit or to his sinful disposition. A Christian, one day old in his new faith, can be spiritual even though he knows very little about the faith. On the other hand, a Christian who is been saved a long time is carnal if he is submissive to his fleshly desires. The carnal believer thus acts like an unsaved person.

Let's use radio stations as a simple illustration. The Holy Spirit is continuously communicating through WHBS (the heavenly broadcasting system), and the sinful world is communicating through WWBS (the world broadcasting system). The believer is like a radio tuned in to one of those two stations at any given time. He has both the Holy Spirit and his flesh within him. When he chooses to tune into HBS, he is in tune with the Spirit. If he chooses WBS instead, then he is in tune with the world system and therefore carnal at that moment. Christians are therefore vacillating between spirituality and carnality moment by moment. We are either controlled by the Holy Spirit or we are not.

All Christians are immature in the faith when they are first saved. They are like babies, and they need to grow in their spiritual maturity. Such growth involves effort, time, and experience. Peter encouraged new Christians this way: *"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."* To grow properly, infants and children need nourishment, rest, exercise, health and love. Unfortunately though, in real life some people may be 30 years old with only the mental and emotional capacities of a five-year-old. In the Christian world there are similarities. Some people have been saved for over 20 years, but their biblical understanding and spiritual activity seem childlike. The Bible goes so far as to say that *"those who should've been teachers"* were still spiritually immature by choice and neglect. This type of immaturity was caused by a lack of true spirituality. The ideal situation

is for a Christian to be spiritual (i.e.; yielded to the Spirit) as he grows from immaturity to maturity. His goal should be a Spirit-filled adulthood and full conformity to Christ. The worst scenario is for a believer to be carnal **and** immature. Christians like that are difficult to distinguish from people who are unsaved. Even Christian leaders will fail when they are not yielded to the Spirit at a key moment. They are just as capable of sin because they are carnal, even though they have matured in spiritual things. On the other hand, spiritually immature believers fail because of inexperience. Their sins are caused by immaturity or ignorance of God's Word, not necessarily from their failure to be yielded to the Spirit.

The results of being filled by the Holy Spirit

After Paul commanded believers to be filled with the Spirit in his letter to the Ephesians, he listed four results or evidences that a believer was Spirit filled.

First, there will be evidence of **ministry to others**. Spirit filled believers will be concerned for others. They will purposely relate to others. They will share the word of God with others.

The **second** result is **joy**. Paul says that if you are a Spirit controlled saint, you will be "*singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*". In his letter to the Philippians he exhorted them to "*rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*" Even in the experiences of grief and sadness or loss we can rejoice because God loves us and He is always in control. The Spirit filled believer will see all of life from the divine perspective.

The **third** result will be **thanksgiving**. Spirit influenced saints will "*be giving thanks always for all things to God the father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*". To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, "*in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*" All believers can thank God for all things and in all ways. With all of the tragedies and disappointments in life, this spiritual quality may seem to be an impossible dream. But the Spirit-filled child of God knows that He is present, and that he is working out His sovereign will.

The **fourth** result is **mutual submission**. Spirit-controlled believers will be "*submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord.*" Since we are all equally accepted in Christ before God, believers must be submissive to each other in personal humility. Paul elaborates on the role of submission when he speaks of the submission of wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters (*or employees to bosses in our time*). Spirit control is necessary in these relationships, but there is a mutual submission of believers **to each other** as brothers and sisters in the Lord. My wife Dawn is in submission to me as her husband. But I must be in mutual submission to her as a coequal person and child of God.

Spirit-filled believers will be marked by Spirit-produced character and conduct. When we allow the Holy Spirit to enter into, and take control of all areas of our lives, “*fruits of the spirit*” will be displayed. Paul goes on to list these nine virtues of Christ-likeness in verses 22-23 of the fifth chapter in his letter to the Galatians.

“The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

The more of our mind, will and emotions we yield to the Holy Spirit, the more obvious these spiritual fruits will be, and others (both saved and lost) will see Christ in and through us.

Some words of caution here:

Please take care not to confuse the fruits of the Spirit with the gifts of the Spirit. Spiritual gifts are an entirely different subject and we’ll cover them at another time in a separate study.

We need to recognize that there has been much error and confusion within the church regarding the Holy Spirit. First let’s recognize the distinctiveness of the present church age which began at Pentecost. The true church, the body of Christ, which He is building, consists of saved Jews and saved Gentiles. The difference between local churches and the true church needs to be recognized. There are certain truths that relate to church believers today that were not true of the Old Testament saints. Additionally, there are certain truths that relate only to Israel and not to the church. We must always be mindful of **our spiritual oneness in Christ** and **in the body of Christ (the church)** - two results produced by the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Our oneness in Christ as believers should always take precedence over denominational and doctrinal differences. We can fellowship with those who are genuinely saved even if they do not interpret the Scriptures the same way we do. We must be careful to evaluate our life experiences by the clear teachings of the word of God. It can’t be the other way around. We must never view our experiences as more authoritative than the Bible. We need to exercise spiritual discernment when people make claims of experiences that are not supported by Scripture. It’s also important that we carefully examine the various meanings and applications that are attached to the doctrines of *the baptism in the Holy Spirit* and *the filling of the Holy Spirit*. Finally, let’s rejoice in all the spiritual blessing God has bestowed on us in Christ. There is no need to search the Scriptures for something that is not there or to take something that is there, misinterpret it, and lead our brethren astray. Our position in Christ is complete!