

Holy Spirit Baptism Class

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What God the Father Promised

The Old Testament looked forward to a day when God's Spirit would dwell inside His people, and all of them, men and women, young and old would become prophets. The great expectation was that when the Messiah arrived, God would enter into a "new covenant" with His people. Then, on the night in which He was betrayed, Jesus lifted the cup and said, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Lk 22:20). By that statement, He was revealing that His death on the cross would bring the promised new covenant to His followers, and after His resurrection He commanded His disciples to wait for it to arrive. He said they would be "baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Ac 1:4-5), and by that baptism He said they would receive the power they would need to be His witnesses (Ac 1:8). That wonderful gift arrived on the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2:1-4; 14-21) and continues to be given by God to every person who repents and believes in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Ac 2:38-39).

Though it is clearly stated in Scripture that God gives this promise to everyone who believes in His Son, as the book of Acts progresses, and the history of the church has often demonstrated, it's possible for it to go unreceived (Ac 8:12, 14-17; 19:1-7). What is given in potential may not be experienced in practice. So, with the desire to receive all that God has given us, let's seek to understand the baptism with the Holy Spirit as accurately as possible.

1. Following the promise

Jesus clearly believed that His disciples would experience a new level of relationship with the Holy Spirit after His death and resurrection, and He based this belief on promises He saw in the Old Testament. There was an excitement and even a joy in the way He assured them that something new was coming which would elevate them to a far greater level of ministry than the world had ever seen. Soon, they would be able to minister as powerfully as He did. He called it "the promise of the Father." Listen to how He describes what will happen to us when this promise arrives:

Jn 4:13-14: "Everyone who drinks of this water (from Jacob's well) will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Jn 7:37-38: Now on the last day, the great day of the feast (Feast of Booths), Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being (koilia) will flow rivers of living water.' But this He

spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (To understand the meaning of "glorified" see: Ac 2:32-33 below)

Jn 14:12: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these will he do; because I go to the Father."

Jn 14:16-17: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with (para) you and will be in (en) you."

Jn 16:7: "But 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 go, I will send Him to you."

Lk 24:49: "And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Ac 1:4-5: Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Ac 2:32-33 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you see and hear." (Peter on the Day of Pentecost)

2. What did the Father promise?

Dt 30:1-6: He promised that our hearts will be set free from the control of our flesh so we can love God with all our heart and soul. And He clearly stated that this is a miracle that He will do in us; it is not something we can do for ourselves (v6). As a result, we will obey Him and be blessed. (See Colossians 2:11).

Jer 31:31-34: He promised that all who enter into the new covenant would know Him and want to obey Him.

Eze 36:24-27: He promised to cleanse away our sins (v25), transform our hearts (v26) and place His Spirit inside our physical bodies (v27,gereb).

Joel 2:28-29: He promised to pour out the Spirit on all His people, men and women, young and old, and they would prophesy.

In other words, God said He would do what no one can do for themselves. We can't free our own hearts from the control of our flesh, but God said He would perform a miracle inside us that would free us to love Him and His ways. He would, literally, transform our lives from the inside out.

3. Why did this wonderful promise have to wait?

John explains that it could not be given until after Jesus was “glorified.” Let's listen to that statement again: “But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn 7:39). And that means Jesus had not yet been crucified, resurrected, ascended into heaven and seated at the right hand of God. There are four distinct steps in the glorification of Jesus Christ.

Q: Why were humans unable to receive this promise before Jesus was glorified?

A: Just as our evil attitudes (pride, rebellion, selfishness) separate our human spirit from God, our sinful deeds bring God's judgment on the flesh of our bodies. They become unclean before Him, and the Holy Spirit cannot dwell in an unclean place.

Q: How did Jesus remove that obstacle?

A: According to Paul in **Romans 8:3**, when Jesus became a man, He took on our sinful flesh. That means He had a body exactly like ours and lived with the same temptations and weaknesses that we experience, but unlike us He never sinned. So when Jesus died on the cross, His death not only paid the penalty for the sin that separates our human spirit from God, but He also removed the uncleanness of our physical bodies as well, which is why they are now a suitable place for the Holy Spirit to dwell. I believe that was the message of the pillar of fire over the head of each disciple on the day of Pentecost. God was announcing, “This person is now my temple, my new dwelling place” (Ac 2:3; 1Co 3:16; Ex 13:21-22).

4. New Testament discipleship

So as you can see, New Testament discipleship is supposed to begin with God transforming the human heart and filling us with the power of the Holy Spirit. Becoming a disciple is not the result of the accumulation of knowledge. Of course, there is a foundational level of knowledge that an unbeliever must understand in order to respond to the gospel message, but the real task of teaching someone how to obey the commands of Christ necessarily takes place after that person is cleansed from their sin, given a new heart and baptized with the Holy Spirit. And that makes us ask a very important question: What must happen for these miracles to take place? I believe the answer is found in the words of the Great Commission. Listen: **Mt 28:18-20**.

As we read the Lord's words carefully, we observe that He is commanding us to make disciples by baptizing them with three baptisms. By "three baptisms" we do not mean three immersions in water; we mean we respond to the threefold call of God to repent, to believe in His Son, Jesus, and to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

First, the baptism of the Father: This is the baptism that John the Baptist was ministering (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3; Ac 13:24; 19:4). It is a baptism of repentance, which includes the confession of our sins and a plea for cleansing, but the most important element in this baptism is our full

surrender to the God of the Bible. In effect, it requires us to “put the apple back on the tree” (Ge 3:6).

Second, the baptism of the Son: In this baptism we join Jesus in His death and resurrection. By faith, we are buried together with Him, raised up together with Him, and made alive together with Him (Col 2:9-14; Ac 20:21).

Third, the baptism of the Holy Spirit: In this baptism we receive the Holy Spirit to dwell within our physical bodies.

When a person has fully received them, these three “baptisms” (Ac 2:38; 19:4-6; 20:21) instantly produce a miraculous inner transformation. That means a person instantly becomes a disciple, but it does not mean they become sinless or spiritually mature. It means they have a new heart and have been filled with the Holy Spirit which makes it possible for that person to be taught to obey all that Jesus commanded us. They now have a heart that wants to obey Him and the power to do what He asks.

5. Jesus at the Jordan River

Jesus Himself modeled full surrender and the reception of the baptism with the Holy Spirit when He was baptized at the Jordan River: Mt 3:13-17.

Q: Why did He choose to be baptized? After all, He had no sins to confess, and John the Baptist's baptism represented repentance and calling on God to wash away past sins. It was a symbolic plea for moral cleansing.

A: When Jesus was water baptized, He dramatically changed its meaning. In His thinking the river became a watery grave, and by being plunged beneath its surface, He was surrendering to the Father's plan for Him which He knew from Scripture would ultimately lead to the brutal death described by such passages as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. He knew that the crucifixion lay ahead of Him, and He was saying “Yes, Father, I accept My assignment.”

So, by asking John to baptize Him Jesus was, in effect, saying, “John, bury Me!” and when He came up from the water, God the Father immediately responded by baptizing Him with the Holy Spirit and audibly declaring, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

At that moment, Jesus not only changed the meaning of water baptism for Himself; He also changed it for all of us. Listen to Paul,

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Ro 6:3-4; see also: Col 2:12).

6. A conversation with Nicodemus

Soon after Jesus was baptized, He told Nicodemus that everyone needs to do what He did. Listen,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:5).

First, “born of water” means we need to engage in water baptism with the same attitude as Jesus which was full surrender to God and faith that Jesus' death and resurrection would provide salvation for those who believed in Him. And, in our case, because we all have sinned (unlike our sinless Savior), repentance for our past sins is also expressed when we are immersed in water.

Second, “born of the Spirit” means we need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. What happened to Jesus must happen to us, and when He came up out of the waters of baptism, He was baptized with the Holy Spirit. And if He needed it, then how much more do we? In fact, He told Nicodemus that if this inner transformation doesn't take place in a person, he or she won't be able to see the kingdom of God (Jn 3:3). In other words, we won't recognize what God is doing or be able to participate in it.

Now, with that in mind, let's go back to the Great Commission. Jesus' statements to Nicodemus about those who can't see or enter the kingdom of God explain why the inner transformation promised by the Father must take place before a person can learn to obey all that Jesus commanded.

And that means everything Jesus and the apostles taught was based on the assumption that believers would be “born from above.” Only then would Jesus be able to continue His ministry through us. He would be the Head, and we would be His Body.

Who is the Holy Spirit, and who are you?

1. Who is the Holy Spirit? (POTF, pp. 19-21)

2. Who are you? The answer is found in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis:

Ge 1:26-27: Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness... God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Ge 2:7: Then God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Hebrew: "nephesh," soul).

So, humans are composed of three elements: dust/body; breath/biological life; image of God/an immortal spirit. Being made in His image means that, like God, we are spiritual beings that are

conscious, rational, volitional, and emotional. And Adam and Eve were also created in God's likeness which I take to mean they were initially sinless.

Here's an important distinction: Being made in God's image does not mean that we are divine. We are not, but we have been made in His image, so much so that His Son could become one of us and still fully express God's character and will.

Being made in His image means we are capable of knowing Him as one person knows another. And that fact reveals why He created us. He wants to have a relationship with us as His adopted children.

Paul mentions our spirit, soul and body in his first letter to the Thessalonians. Listen: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Th 5:23).

So, now, let's answer the question: Who are you? You are an immortal spirit living in a mortal body. You are not your body, but you were designed to interact with the world through your body. The real you will never die. And because the real you is spiritual by nature, you're intuitively conscious of spiritual matters. In fact, people who live in a secular culture are taught by that culture to ignore what they perceive by their spirit.

Let's hear it once more: You're a person because God's a Person. Amazingly, He chose to make you like Himself.

What this baptism is and what it is not

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a definite experience, subsequent to regeneration, whereby the Third Person of the Godhead comes to dwell inside the physical body of the believer. By it, God causes ordinary people to become extraordinarily effective as witnesses for Jesus Christ (Ac 1:5, 8). And by it, God provides us with the power to put to death the deeds of the flesh and walk in true freedom as children of God (Ro 8:1-4; 12-14).

1. An important distinction

Since the baptism with the Holy Spirit is subsequent to and distinct from His regenerative work, a full Christian experience should certainly contain both regeneration and the baptism with the Holy Spirit, but a distinction between the two must be made because there are many people who are genuinely saved, yet they have never been genuinely filled with the Holy Spirit in this way. The difference between regeneration and the baptism with the Holy Spirit can be seen in Scripture. Here are four examples:

First, the apostles were converted under Jesus' ministry (Lk 10:20; Jn 1:35-50; 13:10-11; 15:3), yet they were commanded to wait for a special filling of the Spirit which took place after Jesus' ascension (Lk 24:49; Ac 1:4, 14; 2:1-4).

Second, the Samaritans were saved under the ministry of Philip (Ac 8:5-8, 12), yet they were baptized with the Holy Spirit under the ministry of Peter and John (Ac 8:14-17).

Third, Paul was converted on the road to Damascus by a personal encounter with the resurrected Christ (Ac 9:3-9), yet he was baptized with the Holy Spirit under the ministry of Ananias three days later (Ac 9:17-19).

Fourth, Paul “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” twelve men at Ephesus, yet those twelve men received the baptism with the Holy Spirit after he laid hands on them (Ac 19:5-6).

We can see from these examples that a person can believe in Jesus Christ and yet not receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. There does not need to be a long period of time between salvation and this fulness of the Spirit. In fact, it can be nearly simultaneous (Ac 10:44-48), yet because the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a gift God gives to those who have become righteous through repentance and faith, it follows after the new birth (regeneration).

2. Clarifying three terms

To understand what the baptism with the Holy Spirit is and what it is not, it is helpful to clarify, as well as we are able, these three terms:

Righteousness: To be righteous means a person is in right-standing before God. He or she is accepted by Him and not under judgment for sin. Such righteousness was available prior to the coming of Jesus Christ. Without knowing the name of the Savior who would come, men and women who repented, appealed to the true God for mercy, and trusted in His kindness were given the righteousness of faith (He 11:2,4,5,7,39,40). Jesus and the apostles confidently pointed to the existence of righteous men and women in the Old Covenant. We see a vivid example when we read about Zacharias and Elizabeth (Lk 1:5-80).

Regeneration: Following the cross and resurrection, powerful new realities became possible to those who repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ. By calling upon His name (Ac 2:21), we receive a “once for all” sacrifice (He 7:27) which grants us a continuing righteousness that is not diminished by the sins we commit after becoming a Christian (Ro 8:1). We have a high priest who constantly intercedes for us before the Father (He 8:25). Our human spirit, which was “dead” because of its alienation from God, becomes “alive” because the barrier of sin is removed, and our spirit is joined to Christ. In this way God writes His laws upon our heart (He 8:10) so that the rebellious nature we inherited from Adam is gone (1Co 15:22; 2Co 5:17). Now, in our spirit, which is our true immortal self, we love God and long to please Him. By being joined to Christ, we pass from death to life and inherit with Him all the spiritual riches He won by His cross and resurrection. We “possess all things” with Him (Ro 8:17; 1Co 3:21-23), and there is, of course, no treasure more precious than the Holy Spirit Himself, and we are told that He is given to us “without measure” (Jn 3:34). And this means upon repentance and faith in Christ every believer is given the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Yet, as we observed earlier, a person may be given this gift but not receive what was given. The gift can remain “unopened.”

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit: This is the arrival of the Holy Spirit to dwell within the believer. In regeneration the human spirit is joined to Christ, but by this gift which Christ pours out (Lk 24:49), a believer becomes a “living temple.” The Holy Spirit literally takes up residence within our physical body which has been cleansed and made holy by the cross of Christ (Ro 8:3). He who has been with us (para) in regeneration now comes to dwell inside us (en) by means of a powerful baptism (Jn 14:17).

When speaking prophetically of this future blessing, Jesus used terms that specifically located the Holy Spirit within a person's body (Jn 4:14; 7:37-39; 14; 16-20). Paul spoke of the Spirit the same way. He said, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?” (1Co 6:9. See also: 1Co 3:16-17; 2Co 6:16; Col 1:27).

3. Receiving this baptism

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is not necessarily received automatically. It can remain an unopened gift through a lack of understanding about the things of the Spirit or the absence of someone who is able to minister it to others (Ac 8:14-17). Nor is it received imperceptibly, though it can and should be claimed by faith, even when there has not yet been an experience of God's power (1Jn 5:14-15). There can be times when we must stand in faith, waiting for God to complete what He's promised in His Word.

But while we are waiting, we keep in mind the fact that in every example provided by the New Testament, when a person was baptized with the Holy Spirit, there was an evident, recognizable infusion of the Spirit marked by speaking to God in an unknown language or prophecy. Apparently, an important mark of the Spirit's coming to dwell in us is Spirit-inspired speech. So when He comes, He touches our lips and wants to speak through us, and that shouldn't surprise us (Isa 6:5-8; Jas 3:1-12) because in learning to yield to the Holy Spirit, we must let Him have control of our tongue. That's where He went first on the Day of Pentecost.

4. Conclusion

It's important to understand what the baptism with the Holy Spirit is and what it is not.

It is not the gift of righteousness. Right-standing before God has always been based on repentance and faith. It has never come any other way, whether in the old covenant or the new covenant.

It is not regeneration, the promised new birth. Our faith in Jesus Christ provides us with a new, enduring righteousness which removes the barrier of sin which separated our spirit from God. At that moment, we cease to be spiritually dead and become spiritually alive (Col 2:13), joined to Christ and inheriting with Him all the blessings of God.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is the moment when the “promise of the Father” arrives (Ac 1:4). It is the coming of the Spirit in power to dwell within the body of the believer. We become His “living temple.” What was given in regeneration is now tangibly received.

So, the baptism with the Holy Spirit should not be thought of as an optional gift which a person may or may not wish to receive. Since it is God's way of equipping us to continue Christ's ministry, neglecting it limits His ability to use us. Every child of God should consider it a joy and privilege.

Helping Others receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit

Remember

1. Three baptisms (repent, believe, receive)
2. There are two participants: He pours out/we drink; He exhales/we inhale.
3. If you have repented and believed, then this gift has already been given to you. The issue is learning how to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit, not in convincing God to give it to you.

What is the benefit of tongues?

1. Speaking in tongues helps to prepare us to minister (“turn the radio on”)
2. Speaking in tongues calms us when we feel panic
3. Speaking in tongues helps us bless God and thank Him for what He has done for us (1Co 14:14-17)
4. Speaking in tongues helps us pray accurately (Ro 8:26-27).

Practical suggestions

1. When you are going to minister the baptism with the Holy Spirit there must be power in the room. Ask yourself: Is this room “warm” or “cold” with the presence of the Holy Spirit? If it’s cold, don’t expect anything to happen.
2. The anointing of the Holy Spirit isn’t something you can produce by trying to stir people up emotionally. Emotion often follows the move of the Spirit, but it doesn’t produce the move of the Spirit. In fact, emotion can actually get in the way when a person is trying to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. A person who becomes overly emotional while seeking the baptism needs to calm down.
3. Create an environment where people can prepare themselves. They need to be able to relax, not feel pressured to please us. Some may need to confess sins or press through personal barriers (this may include some sort of deliverance as strange as that may sound). Let them signal when they are ready.
4. Ask: How can I help you?
5. Read POTF p. 61
6. When praying for others, don’t try to “push” the Holy Spirit into them. Picture this instead: Jesus laying His hand on top of yours as you lay your hand on the head or shoulder of the person. Then invite the Holy Spirit to settle on them. There’s a gentleness to this. It’s not a “zap.”
7. When people feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, they may respond in a variety of ways. Here are three categories that will help you assess what’s happening: Biblical phenomena (speaking in tongues, prophecy, spontaneous and free-flowing worship or prayer), non-biblical

phenomena (falling, trembling, weeping, laughing), anti-biblical phenomena (animal sounds, violent shaking, twitching, hissing).

Things that hinder people from receiving

1. Fear of “walking on water.” This may be the first time they have ever had to actually “step out of the boat” like Peter did (Mt 14:28-31) and experience a miracle. The underlying issue for that person may be accepting that the Holy Spirit is real.
2. Fear of surrendering the tongue. The person may be afraid of letting the Holy Spirit take over their speech. There may be a fear of being deceived (Is this a real language?) or letting go of control may have been dangerous for this person in the past because they were betrayed by people they trusted.
3. Is this gibberish? What I’m saying doesn’t make sense to me.
4. Bitterness toward people or God. This is a very real barrier, so we must ask the question: Is there anyone I haven’t forgiven?
5. Cessationist teaching. The person has been taught that the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit don’t happen anymore, so what’s happening to me must be self-deception or demonic (see POTF, Ch. 8, The Perfect and the Partial).

Walking in the Spirit

Read POTF pp.80-81, last paragraph.