

Holy Spirit 04

THE BAPTISMS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Initial Experience and Continuing Evidences of the Spirit-Filled Life

**Introduction Adopted by General Presbytery
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On the Day of Pentecost visitors to Jerusalem witnessed the unbelievable sight of Spirit-filled believers declaring the glory of God in languages they had never learned. Their response to the supernatural was natural: "What does this mean?" [1] (Acts 2:12). Twenty centuries later the same question is being asked as the Holy Spirit is doing spectacular things all around the world, not just in one location. Tongues-speaking Pentecostals have become the second largest family of Christians in the world, surpassed only by the Roman Catholic Church. One Pentecostal scholar has gathered convincing statistics on the explosion of church growth around the world in the Pentecostal and charismatic groups that teach the necessity of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit. [2]

Biblical and Historical Background

The emphasis Pentecostals place on the person and work of the Holy Spirit is not a recent discovery. The outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was the logical culmination of revealed truth about the Holy Spirit as found throughout Old Testament Scriptures.

The usual reference in the Old Testament to the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of God" or "his Spirit." At creation, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1:2). Artisans at the building of the tabernacle were "filled with the Spirit of God" (Exodus 31 and 35). Prophets and national leaders ministered supernaturally when prompted by the Spirit of God (Numbers 24:2; 1 Samuel 10:10; 11:6; 2 Chronicles 15:1; 24:20; Isaiah 48:16; Ezekiel 11:24; Zechariah 7:12).

Prophecy, or speaking in behalf of God, is evident throughout the Old Testament. Sometimes the message came almost silently in thoughts, dreams, or visions. At other times it came with significant emotion (cf. Numbers 11:24-29). In each case, however, prophetic speech is the unique sign of the Spirit's coming to anoint particular persons for divinely given ministries. [3]

In Acts 2:17 Peter decisively connects the Pentecost event with the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even

on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28,29). In fact, lest we miss the point, Peter repeats Joel's prophecy in a way not found in the Hebrew text, saying a second time, "I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy" (v.18). The viewpoint of both the Old and New Testaments is that the coming of the Spirit is indicated by prophetic speech. The initial prophetic speech in Acts is speaking in tongues.

The Israelites were unaccustomed to such a universal move of the Spirit in the lives of sons and daughters, old and young, men and women. Only a select few charismatic prophets, kings, and judges were moved by the Holy Spirit to minister supernaturally and experience the presence of the Spirit, as David demonstrates in the Psalms. Peter put the Day of Pentecost visitation into perspective as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and a divinely ordered gift of the Spirit for all believers, not just for leadership offices.

Biblical theology is a unity based on the entire Bible. It is both progressive and unified as God reveals cumulative truth from Genesis to Revelation. The Old Testament prophesied a coming age of the Spirit. The theme is enlarged in the Spirit-empowered ministry of Jesus. At Pentecost the Spirit comes in power to all God's people. Yet individual writers emphasize special aspects of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The writings of Paul tend to emphasize the Spirit-filled life subsequent to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Luke's writings place more emphasis on the coming of the Spirit to empower life and ministry through the Spirit-filled life." There is no contradiction between Paul's writings and Luke's writings. They are complementary.

Baptism in the Spirit as the Distinctive Message of Pentecostals

The very essence of Pentecostalism is the recognition that the experience of conversion, while supremely precious, does not exhaust God's supply of what is available to the believer. Scripture makes it clear that all believers have the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9,16). However, the constant hunger for "more of God" is the heartbeat of Pentecostalism. This is particularly true when, within Scripture, we recognize another life-changing experience available to every believer.

The baptism in the Spirit is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. The scriptural ideal for the believer is to be continually filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). [4] Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the specific event that introduces the believer to the ongoing process of living a Spirit-empowered life. Although speaking in tongues has value as an outward sign of Spirit baptism, it is designed by God to be much more than evidence of a past experience. Subsequent speaking in tongues brings enrichment to the individual believer when employed in private prayer (1 Corinthians 14:4) and to the congregation when accompanied by the interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:6,25).

From its founding, The General Council of the Assemblies of God has recognized the baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth. It has also recognized that the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Spirit is speaking in tongues. [5] The church's Statement of Fundamental Truths contains the following statements:

Fundamental Truth 7: All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian church. With it comes the endowment of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31). This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-46; 11:14-16; 15:7-9). With the baptism in the Holy Ghost come such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence for God (Acts 2:43; Hebrews 12:28), and intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word, and for the lost (Mark 16:20).

Fundamental Truth 8: The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-10,28), but different in purpose and use.

The Assemblies of God has consistently taught the importance of the Baptism and the Spirit-filled life for both the individual believer and the entire Church.

While the exact phrase "baptism in the Holy Spirit" never occurs in Scripture, [6] it is closely related to the biblical expression "baptize(d) in [or with] the Holy Spirit" (cf. Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5; 11:16). John the Baptist, the first to use the expression shortly before Jesus began His public ministry, said, "He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; cf. also John 1:33). At the conclusion of His earthly ministry, Jesus referred to John's statement (Acts 1:5); and Peter, in reporting on the events in the home of Cornelius, also repeated the statement (Acts 11:16).

Several other terms express essentially the same idea as the expression "baptized in the Holy Spirit." Acts 1:8 promises the reception of power when "the Holy Spirit comes on you" (cf. also 19:6). Acts 2:4 states, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit," on the Day of Pentecost (see also Acts 9:17). In Acts 2:17 Peter describes this filling with the Holy Spirit as a fulfillment of the prophet Joel's prophecy that God will "pour out [his] Spirit on all people" (cf. also 10:45). According to Acts 8:16, prior to the ministry of Peter and John in Samaria, the Holy Spirit "had not yet come" on any of the Samaritans (cf. also 10:44; 11:15). After the laying on of the apostles' hands, the Samaritans "received the Holy Spirit" (cf. also 10:47).

The word baptism refers literally to a "dipping" or "immersing" in water. When one speaks of baptism in the Holy Spirit, the term functions as a metaphor or comparison with water baptism. Christian water baptism is an initiatory rite, acknowledging conversion and the indwelling presence of the Spirit. [7] The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a subsequent powerful, overwhelming immersion in the Holy Spirit. While New Testament believers sometimes received later infillings of the Spirit (Acts 4:31), "baptism" in the Holy Spirit in all the biblical examples happens only once to an individual.

A Gift with Rich Benefits

Modern evangelical Christians place great stress on being "born again" (John 3:3,5-8; 1 Peter 1:3) which is rightly understood to be the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration (John 3:6; Titus 3:5). As He comes in regenerating power, the Spirit makes His presence known as an inner witness to the believer's new status as a child of God. The new believer can now pray, "Abba, Father," expressing the intimate and confident relationship of children to their Heavenly Father (Romans 8:15,16). Having taken up residence within, the Spirit also guides and enables the new believer in a transforming life of progressive sanctification or spiritual maturity (Romans 8:13; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 5:16,22-24).

The work of the Spirit, however, is not just an inner transformation in new birth and sanctification; it is also a work of empowering believers as witnesses for Christ, thus fulfilling the mission of the Church (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). [8] Peter presented the initial descent of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as a mighty inauguration of the last days in which all of God's people will be baptized, or filled, with the Spirit (Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:17,18). The final words of his sermon are, "Repent, and be baptized. . . And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 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). Far from being a one-time event on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit is noted to have baptized, or filled, believer after believer. Both the Book of Acts and the Pauline epistles show repeated and continuing empowerment by the Holy Spirit and the impartation of powerful gifts for ministry (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 10:44-46; 19:4-7; Romans 1:11; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 5:18-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:19,20; Hebrews 2:4). Any understanding of the Spirit's work that is limited to regeneration is not representative of the biblical record.

Fidelity to Scripture, therefore, indicates that men and women ought to seek not only the transformational work of the Spirit in regeneration and sanctification, but also the empowering work of the Spirit in the Baptism promised by Jesus and repeatedly witnessed in the Book of Acts and the Epistles. Lives are to be changed by the Spirit in regeneration and then set ablaze and gifted by the same Spirit for a lifetime of service. Seeking the baptism in the Spirit is strategic for effective Christian living and ministry.

An Experience Subsequent to Regeneration

The baptism in the Spirit is subsequent to and distinct from the new birth. Scripture clearly describes a conversion experience in which the Holy Spirit baptizes believers into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Scripture just as clearly describes an experience in which Christ baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). These cannot refer to the same experience since the agent who does the baptizing and the element into which the candidate is baptized are different in each case. [9]

Luke, author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, generally presents the baptism or infilling of the Spirit as something which occurs to disciples or believers, his characteristic terms for those who have already been converted or saved. For Luke,

baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience distinct from and logically subsequent to personal salvation. Moreover, Luke presents baptism in the Spirit and its accompanying power as the normal expectation of believers in the first decades of the Church's history. Subsequent usually means a time separation, but not always. The Gentiles who had gathered at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10) seemingly experienced both regeneration and baptism in the Holy Spirit at the same time. While a theological description of what happened would require regeneration as a prerequisite for baptism in the Spirit, everything happened so quickly that two separate works of God were experienced as one event. In this case, Spirit baptism was logically subsequent to regeneration, although it may not have been subsequent in time to any perceptible degree. [10] Every believer has the privilege of being baptized in the Spirit and should then expect to speak in tongues. The obvious starting point for such a declaration is the account of the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). On that day all the believers were gathered together in one place (Acts 2:1); their number was apparently about 120 (Acts 1:15). For roughly 10 days they had been waiting for "the promise of the Father," as Jesus had charged them to do prior to His ascension (Acts 1:4). Then according to Acts 2:4, "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." [11] As Peter explained to the crowd witnessing the marvelous event, this outpouring of the Spirit fulfilled the ancient prophecy of Joel for the last days (Acts 2:17). No longer would God's Spirit be restricted to a few prophets, but in the new age initiated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the work of the Spirit would now be available to all (cf. also Acts 2:39). Acts 8:4-13 describes Philip's effective ministry in Samaria. Verse 12 summarizes, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Acts 8:14-24 then reports about additional ministry among the Samaritans by the apostles Peter and John. In particular, verses 15-17 say,

When they [Peter and John] arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-17).

The dramatic account of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus is recounted in Acts 9. Saul is knocked down and blinded by the light of Christ's presence. After being led on to Damascus still without sight, Saul is visited by a believer named Ananias, who says to him, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Ananias regards Saul's conversion as having already occurred, apparently at the time of his encounter with the risen Christ. Nevertheless, Saul still needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and Ananias prayed for him to that end. Clearly Saul (also called Paul) was filled with the Spirit some 3 days after his conversion. Years later Paul came to the great city of Ephesus on his third missionary journey. According to Acts 19:7 there were about 12 believers, described as "disciples" in Acts 19:1. The dialogue recorded between Paul and the Ephesus disciples is instructive: And [Paul] asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when [12] you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John's

baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus" (Acts 19:2-4).

Clearly, at the time of this conversation these believers had not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit for they had not heard of the experience. The context presumes that something was lacking. They also had not been instructed about Christian water baptism; although, once Paul explained it to them, they were quickly baptized (19:5). Following their water baptism, "When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (19:6). The narrative could not be clearer in its emphasis that the fullness of the Spirit was received following both the Christian belief of the Ephesian "disciples" and their Christian water baptism (19:5). In the Acts 2, Acts 9, and Acts 19 accounts, the reception of the Spirit occurs following conversion. According to Luke's inspired record, baptism in the Spirit is not an aspect of conversion, but rather a separate and distinct experience. It is also logically subsequent to conversion, although as the experience of the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius makes clear, conversion and baptism in the Spirit can occur in such swift succession that they seem to take place simultaneously.

Tongues as Initial Physical Evidence

The Holy Spirit can inspire people to speak in languages which they have not learned, as was demonstrated conclusively on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2) when people from all over the world heard Galileans speaking foreign languages which they could not have known. In the modern era similar episodes have occurred many times. [13]

The expression "initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit" refers to the first outward, observable sign that the Holy Spirit has come in filling power. The repeated testimony of Scripture is that this physical sign occurred at the time the Spirit was poured out on individuals. When the 120 disciples were filled with the Spirit, they spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4). They spoke then, not a day, week, or year later. When Cornelius' household was baptized in the Spirit, members spoke in tongues, and the believing Jews were amazed (Acts 10:44-48). Again, they spoke in tongues at the same time they were baptized, not at some later time. When the Ephesian believers were baptized in the Spirit, they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:1-6). There is no statement or implication of a delay between the event of the baptism in the Spirit and the evidence of speaking in tongues. Those who teach that there can be a delay in speaking in tongues draw their conclusions from personal experience or the testimony of others, not from a clear statement of Scripture. Since Scripture nowhere teaches, implies, or gives an example of a delay occurring between the baptism in the Spirit and the evidence of speaking in tongues, then we must adhere to the testimony of Scripture. Prior to the Day of Pentecost, many within Israel had concluded that after God spoke to and through the last of the Old Testament prophets, He was speaking directly to Israel no more. Only after Messiah was to arrive, along with the anticipated Age to Come, would God again speak to His people through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, in this spiritually lifeless context, the Spirit begins to be poured out, not just on selected individuals as in the Old Testament, but upon masses of people, essentially everyone in the fledgling Church. It was as if the cry of Moses' heart had been fulfilled: "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on

them!" (Numbers 11:29). In some marvelous sense the Age to Come had begun, and a church filled with people who spoke in tongues was a sign signifying the dawn of a new period in God's eternal plan for humankind.

That Luke understands speaking in tongues to demonstrate the infilling presence of the Holy Spirit is clearly indicated by an examination of Acts 10:44-48.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God (Acts 10:44-46).

The conclusion is clear: If someone, even someone unexpected, hears the Word and speaks in divinely inspired tongues, that person has received the Holy Spirit. This was the reasoning of Peter and the other Jewish Christians present. Speaking in tongues is clear evidence that someone has received the gift of the Holy Spirit (or been baptized in the Holy Spirit). The evidence was so clear for Peter that he insisted Cornelius and his Gentile friends be baptized in water (10:48).

Later, as Peter discussed the Cornelius incident with the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem, he again referred to the phenomenon he had witnessed, "So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" (Acts 11:17). The next verse confirms that the apostles and brethren accepted tongues as convincing evidence of the baptism in the Spirit: "When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God" (11:18).

While Acts 10:45,46 establishes that speaking in tongues is clear evidence of Spirit baptism, evidence supporting this doctrine is also provided by the overall pattern of Acts associating speaking in tongues with baptism in the Spirit. Acts describes five occasions on which people received an empowering of the Spirit for the first time (i.e., baptism in the Spirit). In none of these accounts are all of the details given, but four of these occasions include significant detail. For Paul's reception of the Spirit recorded in Acts 9:17,19, hardly any detail is recorded. As previously noted, supernatural phenomena are a sign of the coming of the Spirit. The New Testament simply picks up on a very important Old Testament motif.

In Acts 2, 10, and 19 various phenomena are indicated, such as the sound of wind, tongues as of fire, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. [14] The only phenomenon occurring in each case, however, is speaking in tongues.

In the Acts 8 account of Peter and John's ministry among the Samaritans, speaking in tongues is not specifically mentioned but it is strongly implied. After the apostles had laid their hands on the Samaritans, some visible and extraordinary manifestation accompanied the reception of the Spirit. This is evident for, after seeing something remarkable, the magician Simon wanted to buy the ability to confer the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:18 notes explicitly, "When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money." Based on the pattern found in Acts 2, 10, and 19 it seems most likely that what Simon saw was the Samaritan believers speaking in tongues. Had the experience been only by faith without any accompanying sign, Simon would not have known whether the Samaritan believers actually received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9:17-19 suggests that Saul of Tarsus (i.e., the apostle Paul) was filled with the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Ananias. Though no details of this filling are given, we

know from 1 Corinthians 14:18 that Paul prayed in tongues regularly and often. It would hardly be surprising if that pattern was begun at the time he was filled with the Spirit. Despite the sketchiness of the report about Paul's baptism in the Spirit, and despite the fact that tongues are not explicitly mentioned in Act 8, the evidence of chapters 2, 10, and 19 demonstrates an overall pattern of speaking in tongues as regularly accompanying the baptism in the Holy Spirit. When these three witnesses are linked with (1) Luke's underlying awareness of the Spirit's presence in divinely inspired speech and (2) the strong inference of Acts 10:45,46 connecting speaking in tongues with the gift of the Spirit, the Pentecostal doctrine that speaking in tongues constitutes evidence of Spirit baptism is clearly established. [15]

The Baptism—Entry Into the Spirit-Filled Life

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is just the open door leading into a Spirit-filled life—a fact that can be easily overlooked, even by Pentecostals. Though we believe that speaking in tongues is the unmistakable initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we do not believe it signifies instant maturity. There are many other evidences that a life continues to be filled with the Spirit and is growing and maturing spiritually. Having spoken in tongues at the baptism in the Spirit, the Spirit-filled believer must continue to respond to the supernatural promptings of the Holy Spirit. Praying in the Spirit (intercessory and worship expressions in tongues) should be a continuing part of the new Spirit-filled life. Though not all Spirit-filled believers are given the gift of tongues which through interpretation edifies the church congregation (1 Corinthians 12:30), they all have the privilege of praying in the Spirit, especially at times when the human intellect does not know how to pray. Likewise, every Spirit-filled believer can and should expect to be used in supernatural ways in some, though not all, of the gifts of the Spirit. We cannot agree with some who teach that the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) alone are sufficient evidence that a believer has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. [16] But we do affirm that such character qualities (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith and faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) should be seen in the lives of those who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. After baptism in the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit should develop alongside a growing ministry empowered by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We urge all believers to grow in these character qualities as persistently as they seek the gifts of the Spirit. [17]

A Promise for All Believers

We are fully aware that within the Christian community there are various interpretations of the biblical description and universal availability of the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. This paper has attempted to deal with the biblical texts relating to the subject in as open and careful a manner as possible. Though some critics have accused Pentecostals of making theology subservient to individual experience, we feel that the studied conclusions presented above are both taught in Scripture and confirmed by experience, not unjustifiably based on experience alone. Could it be that those who seek to refute the baptism in the Spirit on the ground that it is based on experience rather than on Scripture may indeed be arguing from their own experience of not having received the Baptism with the initial biblical evidence? We appeal to all believers to study the biblical passages prayerfully, and with open mind

and heart seek the fullness of the Spirit for today's challenges, just as that same Spirit moved upon a unified body of believers in the Early Church.

The overwhelmingly godless condition of society today, with evil becoming increasingly rampant, calls for a Spirit-filled church that can meet the challenges of Satan with a supernatural demonstration of Holy Spirit power. If there is fear of an experience that seems beyond one's rational control, let the personal love of a benevolent Heavenly Father give assurance to both heart and mind. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:11-13).

We appeal to our non-Pentecostal fellow believers who may in complete sincerity disagree with Pentecostal theology and practice. Rather than engaging in attacks on fellow believers who likewise base their spiritual experience on Scripture, please follow the example of Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-39). "For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God" (5:38,39). We believe this last-days outpouring of the Holy Spirit is God's sovereign move to meet the satanic challenges of the day and to prepare Christ's bride for His soon return. Around the world, God is moving by His Spirit in powerful and dynamic ways.

You are not more loved by God because you have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but you will be better equipped to witness with boldness to God's abundant grace. Empowered service and holy living accompany the Spirit-filled life after the Baptism initiation. In believing, expecting faith, ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit.