



The Holy Spirit

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| The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit

4.1 The Promise of the Holy Spirit

4.1.1 John the Baptist

We are first introduced to the phrase “baptise you with the Holy Spirit” by John the Baptist.¹ All four gospels contain John’s prophecy that Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit,² and John portrays this activity as the pinnacle of the ministry of the now arriving Messiah.

“I baptise you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

Luke 3:16

John contrasts his ministry with that of Jesus, and his mission calling with that of the Messiah’s and the baptisms which they perform. Baptism in³ the Spirit is contrasted with John’s baptism,⁴ but is also spoken of in parallel terms; this is to help us understand the nature of baptism in the Spirit – it will be as overwhelming and transforming as being plunged into a river!

John is a prophet, and as such he sees and speaks of the ministry of Jesus in its final completed state. Jesus to him is the “*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*”⁵ and the one who will baptise in the Holy Spirit. One of these activities the bible clearly portrays as a once-for-all act – Jesus atoning sacrifice on the cross; the other the bible shows to be a continuing work of the ascended Christ – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh.⁶

¹ It is worth noting that “baptism in the Holy Spirit” is not a NT phrase – baptism in the Holy Spirit is always presented as a verb, not a noun! However, it is very difficult to do this when talking about the subject!

² Mt 3:11, Mk 1:8, Lk 3:16, Jn 1:33

³ Baptism *in* and baptism *with* the HS are different ways of translating the same phrase, “*baptisei en pneumati*” (see Mt 3:11, Mk 1:8, Lk 3:16, Jn 1:33, Acts 1:5, 11:16). The Greek “*en*” is a preposition meaning *in, by or with*. 1 Cor 12:13 may or may not be referring to the baptism in the Spirit, as it speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit in baptising us into Christ, an idea which does not appear to be completely synonymous with either water baptism or baptism in the Holy Spirit – it could be referring to the Holy Spirit’s work of regeneration within believers which brings them into Christ.

⁴ We should also note that John’s baptism, whilst being *physically* identical, was not the same as believers’ baptism. His baptism was for repentance to prepare the people for the coming Messiah; water baptism today is out of a faith response to who Jesus has been revealed to be through his incarnation.

⁵ Jn 1:29

⁶ Acts 2:17

4.1.2 OT prophets

That the baptism in the Holy Spirit was foretold by the OT prophets is made clear by Peter's declaration that the events of Pentecost were a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy.⁷ Other prophets also spoke of this time, though of course none of them use the word baptism.

...till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile land, and the fertile field seems like a forest.

Isaiah 32:15

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

Isaiah 44:3

I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."

Ezekiel 39:29

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

Zechariah 12:10

4.1.3 Jesus

Jesus himself promised the Holy Spirit, and affirmed John's prophetic declaration that Jesus would baptise in the Holy Spirit,

For John was baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 1:5

⁷ Joel 2:28

This was his statement to the disciples after his resurrection and before his ascension. He had spoken at length about the coming of the Holy Spirit just before his death also. John records this in greatest detail for us in chapters 14-16 of his gospel.

Jesus characterises the baptism in the Holy Spirit as receiving power to witness, warning his disciples not to try to fulfil his commission to them until the Spirit has clothed them with power.

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

Luke 24:49

But 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 1:8

4.2 Pentecost

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2:1-4

4.1.1 A New Era

Pentecost marked a new and decisive era in the purposes of God, it was the final (but ongoing) act of the incarnation and marked the arrival of the final phase of the redemptive plan of God. This plan was to be fulfilled in the earth by men and women empowered by the Holy Spirit to bring God's rule into the earth through the power proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom.

Pentecost has greater significance than a scriptural "first mention" of the baptism in the Spirit; it marks the beginning of an unbroken outpouring of the Spirit – the beginning of a corporate baptism in the Spirit, which is still continuing today.

It is therefore a paradigm event, not just serving as our example of baptism in the Spirit, but setting a pattern for the way the community of the Spirit – the Church – is to be throughout the church era. Some have confused this "specialness" of Pentecost with "uniqueness" – that is they content it was only for that time, or a short time following, that the Spirit would be poured out in such a way; we must reject that idea in favour of seeing Pentecost as a paradigm or pattern event which guarantees the ongoing outpouring of the Spirit and shows us the manner in which we should expect the ministry of the Spirit to continue.

4.1.2 Signs and Wonders – Wind

Pentecost came with signs and wonders: this is a pattern for us – the Spirit comes with signs and wonders. The signs and wonders may be different and cannot repeat that one-time fulfilment of God's promise to pour out his Spirit in a new way, but they do continue in a like way.

The first sign on the day of Pentecost was the sound of a rushing wind. The word Spirit in both Hebrew, *ruach*, and Greek, *pneuma*, fundamentally means *wind* or *breath*. When the Spirit comes he comes true to his nature – as the mighty rushing wind of God.

When we look to the OT we find in Ezekiel⁸ imagery about the wind or breath or Spirit of God coming into his people in the vision of the valley of dry bones. We listed above prophetic promises of the coming of the Spirit upon people.

The idea of “*filling the house*” is also one found in the prophets. Ezekiel saw the restored temple filled with God’s glory,⁹ Isaiah saw in vision the shaking of the house of God as his glory filled the house and seemed to want to break out through the door!

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Around him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. They were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

Isaiah 6:1-4

Now it is possible that Pentecost took place not in the upper room, but in the Temple,¹⁰ whether or not this is the case, it is clear that the Spirit of God was now filling a different kind of house – one made from living stones, this new house of God at the start of the day of Pentecost, consisted of 120 Spirit-filled believers.

4.1.3 Signs and Wonders – Fire

For God’s people in the wilderness, fire was the sign of his presence amongst them.¹¹ God had also shown himself to be the God who answers by fire in Elijah’s day.¹² He had also spoken through Isaiah saying,

⁸ Ezekiel 37

⁹ Ezekiel 10:3-4

¹⁰ Some reasons for this are: (i) *oikos* (the Greek word for house) is sometimes used to mean the temple, (ii) the outpouring of the Spirit happened at the time of prayer and the believers certainly observed these prayer times at the temple through the early chapters of the book of Acts (iii) the temple courts were the only place in Jerusalem where 3000 could have been drawn together to hear the preaching, (iv) there’s a prophetic symmetry to the idea – the new spiritual temple is brought to birth out of the old natural temple!

¹¹ See Ex 13:21 and others

¹² 1 Kings 18:24

The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire.

Isaiah 4:4

And of course we must remember that Jesus was going to baptise in the Holy Spirit *and with fire*, according to John the Baptist's prophecy.

4.1.4 Signs and Wonders – Tongues

When God first confused men's speech and created diversity in language at Babel it was to thwart the activities of mankind who had turned from God's way and was pursuing their own way to heaven. Now God's way had been made known and made available to men, and the plan of redemption was going to reconcile men to one-another and to God. The way in which the Spirit chose to manifest the gifts of tongues on the day of Pentecost was as a sign of these things.

It also brought fulfilment to Isaiah's prophecy, and served as a prophetic sign,

...with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people,

Isaiah 28:11

4.1.5 A Prophetic Context – Every Nation

God in his sovereign oversight brought about this outpouring into a context where every nation under heaven was represented. This allowed for an initial fulfilment to his commission given to the disciples in [Matt 28](#) and [Mark 16](#).

Of course this wasn't a complete fulfilment, but shows again the prophetic paradigm of Pentecost as a pattern for the church to continue in.

4.1.6 The Final and Continuing Act of the Incarnation

We have already commented that Pentecost marked the final act of the incarnation. Jesus had said that he couldn't send the Spirit unless he went away. Whilst Christ's earthly ministry, especially the work of the cross, is a complete and



finished work, he is not inactive today, nor was he at Pentecost. He is continuing to pour out his Spirit from the throne of heaven.¹³

¹³ Jesus also continues to “give gifts to men” (Eph 4) – that is give ministry gifts as the ascended Christ. These ascension gifts of Ephesians 4 are not gifts of the Spirit (charismata), which means they are not enablings of the Spirit, but rather the gift is the man or woman themselves. These ministry gifts consist of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers.

4.3 Baptism with the Spirit and Regeneration

4.3.1 Distinct from Regeneration

Baptism in the Spirit must be seen as something distinct from regeneration. When we repent and put our faith in Jesus the Holy Spirit comes to regenerate us: we are born again. From this point he indwells us, he lives within us.

We have seen that regeneration is what took place in [John 20:21-22](#),¹⁴ when Jesus breathed on the disciples, which mirrors how God brings Adam to life in Genesis,

the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

[Genesis 2:7](#)

We should note here a confusion of terms that can often arise. “Born Again” (or born of the Spirit) is not exactly the same as “saved” – if you are born again you are saved, but born again refers to an act of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, saved denotes an eternal status conferred by God out of grace and in response to faith. For us today these are one and the same, but before the resurrection they were not and could not be.

4.3.2 Subsequent, but not supplementary

Next we must see that baptism in the Spirit is subsequent to regeneration, though not supplementary. It is subsequent in the same way as baptism in water is subsequent; this is seen in the way Peter describes the response to the gospel, “*repent, be baptised and you will receive the Holy Spirit.*”¹⁵

From Peter’s presentation, and other examples through the book of Acts, we should expect this to all take place as one “conversion experience” of which the elements are distinguishable theologically, though not necessarily experientially.

For example, in Cornelius’ household the experience of “repentance and faith” was not experientially distinguishable from baptism with the Holy Spirit; and there

¹⁴ Thomas’s subsequent experience, and Jesus’ response, in John 20:28-29 demonstrates how this will be effected from them on; cf Rom 10:9-10

¹⁵ Acts 2:38



are many examples of Baptism in the Holy Spirit being co-synchronous with water baptism, i.e. people come up from the water speaking in tongues.

4.3.3 Distinct Purpose

Baptism in the Spirit also fulfils a distinct purpose in the life of a believer: You are born again to save you from sin and death and bring you into a relationship with God. You are filled with the Holy Spirit primarily so that you can engage in the Kingdom mission to which God has called his people: baptism in the Holy Spirit is essential to further the Kingdom because the Kingdom is *“in the Spirit”* [Rom 14:17] and *“does not consist in words but in power”* [1 Cor 4:20].

Believers who have not been baptised in the Spirit often resent the perceived implication that they are somehow lacking in their faith, or that by emphasising baptism in the Spirit, we are saying that there is something lacking in their salvation or the power of the cross. This is why we need to understand the theological distinction between the Spirit’s work of regeneration and empowerment.

4.3.4 Clarifying Some Terms

Being “filled with the Spirit” is sometimes used to describe baptism in the Spirit (Acts 9:17), but more often to describe a subsequent filling (Acts 4:8, 4:31, 13:9). Such subsequent fillings are the expected norm of Christian life. These subsequent fillings are never referred to as “baptism”.

Often there is a distinction in the tenses of the verbs used in Greek that is not clear in the English translation. When “filled with the Spirit” is used to describe what in other places may be referred to as “baptism in the Spirit” a different tense (the aorist) is used to connote a completed act, rather than an ongoing activity where the imperfect tense would be used (Acts 13:52, Eph 5:18).

The aorist tense is also used of a subsequent filling of the Spirit which indicates a sudden empowering (as in Acts 4:8 and 13:9).

If all this is a little confusing, we can summarise with the phrase, “one baptism, many fillings”.



4.4 A Survey of The Book of Acts

We will now take a survey through the book of Acts with respect to the following questions:

- Is baptism in the Spirit a distinct activity from regeneration?
- Is speaking in tongues the primary evidence of baptism in the Spirit?
- How is baptism in the Spirit brought about?

4.4.1 Pentecost part 1, Acts 2:1-13

We have already seen how some of the disciples experienced the regenerating work of the Spirit when Jesus breathed upon them and how Thomas fell at the feet of Jesus and acknowledged his deity and his resurrection. All the 120 had seen Jesus since his resurrection, and presumably had some to a place of faith and experienced the regenerating work of the Spirit either as Thomas had, or as a result of believing the testimony of others about the resurrection.¹⁶

So clearly Pentecost was not regeneration for the 120, and therefore the baptism in the Spirit is seen as distinct from regeneration.

Also for the 120, the evidence of Spirit baptism is speaking in tongues. Although other signs were also present, tongues was a sign that came from within the believers.

The “method” of baptism in the Spirit is here seen as something entirely divinely instigated, although the 120 were obviously active in their obedience to Jesus command to wait in the city.

4.4.2 Pentecost part 2, Acts 2:38-41

Here we have Peter’s appeal, which is often called the Peter package. All we read about the response of the 3000 was that “*those who accepted his message were baptised.*” We should presume this to apply to both water and Spirit baptism in the absence of any greater detail in the text.

¹⁶ Jesus had told Thomas that those who would believe without seeing would be (more?) blessed, Jn 20:29.

4.4.3 Samaria, Acts 8:4-25

Philip goes to preach the gospel in Samaria and many people believe. They are baptised in water, but apparently they are not baptised in the Spirit until Peter and John come and lay hands upon the people. Whilst there is not mention of tongues here, obviously some powerful manifestation of the Spirit accompanies the baptism in the Spirit as Simon the Magician wants to be able to perform the same works of power – this man already claimed to be “the Great Power” – so something quite extraordinary must have been taking place!

4.4.4 Cornelius’s House, Acts 10:23-48

Here is the first time that the gospel is preached to Gentiles, and perhaps Peter needed a little more help from the Holy Spirit than at other times!

What is fascinating here is that the first response we get to the gospel is that the audience starts speaking in tongues. Peter then commands them to be baptised in water, recognising that God is at work! This shows us that the Holy Spirit will not be restricted in responding to faith – Peter’s lack of an appeal didn’t stop him regenerating them; the lack of water baptism did not stop him from baptising them with himself; Peter wisely caught up with the actions of the Spirit!

4.4.5 Ephesus, Acts 19

Here Paul meets some men who know something of Jesus but have only received John’s baptism. Paul therefore baptises them in water in the name of Jesus and lays his hands upon them to receive the Holy Spirit, whereupon they speak in tongues and prophecy.

It is interesting to note here that Luke seems concerned with describing the conversion experience most fully when there may be some lack or error to correct; this would certainly seem to hold for this example, and also that of Philip’s experience in Samaria.

4.4.6 Other conversions (and what is not said!)

There are many other stories in Acts of conversions where no mention is made of the specifics of the conversion experience; should we take this to mean that sometimes Paul didn’t bother baptising in water or laying on his hands so that they might be baptised in the Spirit? Certainly not! Luke has given us the model and pattern for conversion and does not feel the need to describe in detail on every occasion, but only when there is something of additional interest or insight to be gained.

4.5 Gifts of the Spirit

4.4.1 The “Evidence” of Tongues

The weight of NT evidence is that speaking in tongues accompanies baptism in the Spirit. Whilst there are instances where this is not stated explicitly, there are no cases where we are explicitly told that someone had been baptised in the Spirit but did not speak in tongues.

When Paul asks, “*do all speak in tongues?*”¹⁷ he is clearly talking of exercising the gift of the message in tongues, not the gift of speaking in tongues a believer engages in to “*speak mysteries to God*”¹⁸ and to “*edify himself*”.¹⁹

However, talking of evidence is probably missing the point – the baptism in the Holy Spirit comes to enable us to live full of the Spirit; a consequence of this is the gift of tongues – a spiritual language to go with our spiritual nature, and with which to speak to our God who is Spirit.

Speaking in tongues is key to living in the Spirit, for when I speak in tongues “*my mind is unfruitful*”²⁰ – that does not mean my mind goes blank or is empty, but it is not producing fruit after its own kind – the mind is being controlled by the Spirit.²¹ Speaking in tongues brings the mind into submission to the Spirit, when you are baptised in the Spirit and speak in tongues it is the first time you have ever spoken something which is not filtered by your mind, it releases your communication from the confines of the natural man.

4.4.2 The Purpose of the Gifts

Jesus makes clear the purpose of the baptism in the Spirit:

But 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 1:8

The gifts of the Spirit are given in line with this purpose: to witness to Jesus. Paul says they are all given to enable to say “Jesus is Lord”,

¹⁷ 1 Cor 12:30

¹⁸ 1 Cor 14:2

¹⁹ 1 Cor 14:4

²⁰ 1 Cor 14:14

²¹ Romans 8:6

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

This is the call upon individual believers, to witness to the Lordship of Jesus; but more importantly it is the call upon the corporate people – the Church.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

Ephesians 3:10

The Holy Spirit and the gifts he gives are so that we may fulfil our call to witness to Jesus – to make known the plan and purpose of God. As this is to be achieved through the church, then it should not surprise us that some of the gifts of the Spirit are to be used within the church to see the church better equipped in its calling to make known Jesus. Other gifts may have a more direct role outside of the gathered church involved directly in the demonstration of the power of God in Jesus.

The gifts, when used in the church, build up: both individually and corporately as it is the built up, mature, growing church that will most effectively bear witness to Jesus.

The gifts also allow us to serve as living signs and wonders – testifying to the fact that the life of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit is within us!

4.4.3 Unity and Diversity of Gifts

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

4.4.4 The Nine-fold Manifestation

To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

We need to know that gifts of the Spirit are manifestations of the Spirit – proofs of the presence of Almighty God in us and amongst us. In this passage we are given a list of 9 gifts, or manifestations. These, for ease of understanding, can be seen as falling into 3 groups.

4.4.5 Revelation Gifts

The word of wisdom; word of knowledge, and distinguishing of spirits are grouped together as the revelation gifts. They all work by the Holy Spirit communicating some supernatural insight. The word of wisdom brings the very wisdom of God into a decision, a conversation or a problem that is insoluble by the application of human wisdom.²²

A word of knowledge is a piece of divinely received information which is often a key to unlock a situation or to prompt a further action, or further gift, such as healing or prophecy. It can serve as a sign and wonder to an unbeliever and as such open their hearts to receive the gospel.

Distinguishing of spirits brings an insight and understanding to the spiritual source of a word, a person, an action etc. There are 3 possible spiritual sources: The Holy Spirit, an evil spirit or the human spirit (or the flesh). It is also possible that a further insight to the nature of an evil spirit may be discerned in this gift, if that is needed to deal correctly with the situation.

²² See 1 Cor 1:20-25

4.4.6 Vocal Gifts

Prophecy, various kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues are often grouped as the vocal gifts. They are to do with proclamation and intercession, and obviously also have a strong element of revelation.

Prophecies are up-words: they build up, stir up and cheer up.²³ Prophecy will always be in line with the Word of God (the Bible), and bring the right word at the right moment. Prophecy reveals Jesus and his purpose to people so that they might respond to it and know what to do.

Tongues here is a special form of the gift of tongues given to all who are baptised in the Spirit: a message that is for the building up of the church and which must be interpreted. Whilst we know that tongues speak mysteries to God²⁴ an interpretation (which is not a word for word translation) may be addressed either to God or men.²⁵

Interpretation of tongues is a vital gift if we are to benefit from the revealing of the mystery spoken in the message in tongues. We are instructed not to bring a message in tongues if there is no-one present with the gift of interpreting²⁶ or we are prepared to bring the interpretation ourselves.²⁷

4.4.7 Power Gifts

Faith, healings and working miracles (or works of power) are referred to as the power gifts: that is they demonstrate the power of God. These gifts are essential to a true witness to the Kingdom of God which is not to do with words, but power!

Faith is always produced by the word of God. A good example of exercising the gift of faith is when Paul is being ship-wrecked on the way to Rome; his conviction in the word that he had received from God's angel was a powerful demonstration of who Jesus is.²⁸

Healings is given in the plural form which may allude to the fact that certain people have specific gifts of healing for certain ailments. These are primarily to be seen and used outside of the Church, although we should not withhold them from believers who are sick. Wherever they are used they are not just a means of showing mercy and compassion, but witnessing to Jesus and demonstrating the power of God.

²³ See 1 Cor 14:3

²⁴ 1 Cor 14:2

²⁵ The phrase "unless he interprets" (1 Cor 14:5) suggests that an interpreted tongue can fulfil the same purpose as prophecy.

²⁶ 1 Cor 14:28

²⁷ 1 Cor 14:13

²⁸ See Acts 27



Miracles are manifestations of the power of God in tangible and unequivocal ways. They show the power of the Kingdom and refute human, naturalistic arguments with something that can only be explained by acknowledging God is at work.
