

CHIEF

MINISTRIES

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For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

v6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” v7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. v8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:5-8 ESV).

If we function according to our ability alone, we get the glory; if we function according to the power of the Spirit within us, God gets the glory!

The New Testament teaching regarding the baptism with the Holy Spirit has been immersed in controversy, especially during the last century. Should it be called baptism in the Holy Spirit, by the Holy Spirit or with the Holy Spirit? Should we be talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Historical controversies often center on terms that can divide unnecessarily. The first reference in the New Testament to the baptism with the Holy Spirit is that of John the Baptist, who contrasts his baptism with water and Jesus’s with the Spirit; “*He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire*” (Matthew 3:11, Luke 3:16). Mark’s account (Mark 1:8) omits “with fire.” John the Baptist also said, “*The man on whom you see the Spirit come down (as a dove) and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit*” (John 1:33). Although John’s Gospel has the most to say about the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist’s word is the only explicit reference of being baptized with the Spirit in the fourth Gospel. The next reference to the baptism with the Holy Spirit is Luke quoting Jesus just before His ascension to heaven: “*For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 1:5).

When Jesus asked to be baptized by John the Baptist, John tried to deter Him: “*I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?*” Jesus replied, ‘*Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.*’ (Matthew 3:14-15). John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, “*heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him*” (v.16). This is when Jesus, Himself was given the Holy Spirit without limit (John 3:34) and became fully conscious of who He was. “*A voice from heaven said, ‘This is my son whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’*” (Matthew 3:17).

The experience of being baptized with the Holy Spirit is obvious in at least 5 places in the book of Acts:

1. *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4)*
2. *Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:17)*
3. *So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” v18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; (Acts 9:17-18)*
4. *And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ (Acts 11:16)*
5. *And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. (Acts 19:6)*

While the aforementioned references indicate an initial baptism with the Spirit, it could be argued that the same phenomenon could happen to the same people again: *“Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them.....” (Acts 4:8)*. Whereas this verse could well have described Peter generally in those days, some scholars believe Peter had a fresh feeling then and there as he addressed the rulers and teachers of the law. If so, this happened to Paul: *“Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas.....” (Acts 13:9)*. Furthermore, following a great prayer meeting where the place was “shaken” the disciples were “all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31). These were possibly fresh baptisms with the Spirit, even if the Pentecostal phenomena of wind and fire were not repeated.

Jesus also used the word baptism in an entirely different way. He asked the disciples, *“Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”* His immature disciples hastily replied, *“we can” (Mark 10:38-39)*. They did not know what they were saying. Jesus was speaking of an ordeal not far away - when He would drink the cup the Father had prepared for Him. He later prayed in Gethsemane, *“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me” (Matthew 26:39)*. Jesus was speaking of a baptism of incalculable suffering, one that meant physical pain, rejection, injustice, and the worst imaginal ordeal - that of the cross. *“I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed” (Luke 12:50)*.

The word baptize technically means, “to be immersed or drenched.” And yet the Spirit is said to fall or come on people (Acts 8:16, 10:44). The disciples were to be clothed with power “from on high” (Luke 24:49), which means the Spirit comes down from heaven. Some are adamant that the baptism with the Spirit is an initial once-for-all experience; others believe it can happen again and again. I believe only you and your actions or lack thereof can prohibit the Holy Spirit from falling on a person repeatedly, whether the person had already been baptized, or drenched, with the Spirit.

There were at least two movements that emerged in the early 20th century that frequently use the term baptism with the Holy Spirit. The best known is that which came largely out of the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, California in 1906. The Holy Spirit fell on this group in great power and speaking in tongues became prominent. Classic Pentecostalism owes its existence to the Azusa Street meetings. The baptism with the Holy Spirit became synonymous with speaking in tongues. The second movement was the early Holiness movement, which gave rise to the Church of the Nazarene, the Assemblies of God a few years later and the United Pentecostals. The Nazarenes, having their roots in Wesleyan perfectionism, the church of the Nazarene taught that baptism with the Holy Spirit was connected to their doctrine of entire sanctification. Nazarenes taught that sanctification was an experience to be received, but it had nothing to do with speaking in tongues. Indeed, the original name: Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene becomes Church of the Nazarene, as they wanted to be sure nobody confused them with the “tongues movement”, as it was called. The Assemblies use the “power” behind tongues to develop the grants and missionary organization to plant churches all over the world and it continues to be the largest and fastest growing body of believers, worldwide since then.

There are therefore at least three views regarding the baptism with the Holy Spirits. First, the prevailing conservative evangelical view is that the baptism with the Spirit is an unconscious event that comes to every believer at conversion. This would be the Reformed view of the baptism with the Spirit. The biblical support for this view is based almost entirely on 1 Corinthians 12:13: *“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”* For conservative Evangelicals, this verse is definitive, clear and final. The baptism with the Spirit is part of the package when a person is converted, regenerated, or given saving faith. In Christ *“you have been enriched in every way”*. Therefore *“you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.” (1 Corinthians 1:5, 7)*. Some would say this comes at baptism with water. Others teach that saving faith means that the person was baptized with the Holy Spirit. In any case, according to most conservative Evangelicals, all Christians have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Any word to them that they should also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit is seen as redundant. These people are taught and teach that they “got it all” at conversion. Not all who teach that all Christians are baptized with the Spirit at conversion are cessationists, but all cessationists certainly believe that the baptism with the Spirit is given at conversion.

I have referred to the other two views, namely, the Pentecostal view that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is characterized by speaking in tongues and the Holiness view (Wesleyan), which would include The Salvation Army, that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is entire sanctification but has nothing to do with tongues. As for the Nazarenes, the baptism with the Holy Spirit became normative from 1928 until the seventies, when it was argued by a number of scholars that John Wesley himself did not believe this. It would seem therefore that Nazarenes are moving away from their traditional view that sanctification was an experience of the baptism with the Spirit. In any case, both the Pentecostal and the traditional Nazarene view have in common that the baptism with the Spirit is: 1) conscious and 2) subsequent (after) to being born again.

What then does 1 Corinthians 12:13 mean - that "*we were all baptized by one Spirit?*" I reply: Being baptized by the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:13 certainly; 1) refers to one's initial conversion; 2) describes every believer; 3) is what happens objectively to all Christians; and 4) is unconscious; 5) is an event, not an experience. There are many references to baptism with water, showing it to be one's first act of obedience after having believed (Acts 2:41; 8:12-13; 16:33; 9:18; 19:3-4,5; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 1:13-16). Paul therefore may be referring obliquely to their baptism by water and shows that the Spirit also immerses or drenches all who believe. Paul, in any case is saying that all Christians have the Holy Spirit, as in Romans 8:9, "*And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*" Indeed, all who have been baptized with water have the Holy Spirit, because they believed and repented first.

However, to superimpose Luke's usage of the baptism with the Holy Spirit upon 1 Corinthians 12:13 -and to claim that all Christians automatically experience what the earliest church experienced - is incongruous. Paul is not saying all Christians receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit (as described by Luke in the book of Acts) at conversion. Certainly not. 1 Corinthians 12:13 is not describing an experience, it refers to an objective, unconscious event, it is therefore not a reference to the baptism with the Holy Spirit as described in the book of Acts. Neither is it a verse that says you "get it all" at conversion. And to those who would say that 1 Corinthians 12:13 shows you get it all at conversion and is supported by 1 Corinthians 1:7 ("You do not lack any spiritual gift"), I ask: Why does Paul urged the Corinthians in the same letter to covet the best spiritual gifts? (1 Corinthians 12:31).

It is surely a given that the disciples were regenerate prior to the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus said they were made "clean". "*You are clean, though not every one of you*" (John 13:10), the latter part referring to Judas Iscariot who would betray Him. Again, "*You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you*" (John 15:3). In the upper room on the Day of His resurrection, Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, "*Receive the Holy Spirit*" (John 20:22-23). I am satisfied something happened to them, although I am not sure what. Perhaps it was a further measure of the Spirit and higher level of preparation for what was coming in a few days. We need not be sidetracked on this verse and debate what all happened to them right then, but in any case, it may be assumed that the disciples were saved prior to Pentecost despite their lack of acute understanding. It was the baptism with the Holy Spirit that cleared everything up for them.

My point is this: The disciples experience of the baptism with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost therefore shows that it was conscious and came to them having believed already.

What is the meaning of the fire - that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire? The properties of fire include at least three things: power, illumination and cleansing. The first thing Jesus mentioned in promising the Spirit was "power" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). This is what enabled the disciples to evangelize with effectiveness and without fear. Second, fire also provided illumination; it is what enabled the disciples to see why Jesus died and rose from the dead. The baptism with the Spirit provides great clarification with regard to assurance of salvation and sound teaching. Third, fire cleanses; the baptism with the Holy Spirit cleanses the heart - purifying the heart (Acts 15:9). It does not eradicate the sinful nature, but it enables the heart to focus clearly on what brings honor and glory to God.

Why is it that some Christians are uneasy at the thought that there might be more for them after their conversion? Is it something they don't want to think about? Is it something that would challenge their theology? Or pride? Does the idea of a baptism, or sealing, of the Spirit beyond conversion suggests they would have to move out of their comfort zones? Or is it not a thrilling possibility - that of experiencing the power, the peace and joy from the immediate witness of the Holy Spirit?

When the Samaritans had accepted the Word of God, Peter and John went to see them. The new disciples there wanted more. Peter and John prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they simply had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). The context shows unmistakably that these people in Samaria - some of whom were healed, some of whom were delivered of evil spirits (Acts 8:7) had truly believed Phillip's word and were already converted. Then did they not already have the Holy Spirits? Of course they did! If they did not have the Spirit, then they did not have Christ (Romans 8:9). No one can say "Jesus is Lord" but by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). But they wanted more, what was lacking? The conscious baptism with the Spirit. That is what is meant by the words, "*The Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them,*" although they were baptized (by water). All of this goes to show that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a conscious experience and generally follows one's having believed.

Saul of Tarsus was converted on the road to Damascus, and yet Ananias was sent to him that he might "*see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 9:17-19). This is the usual pattern with believers: First, regeneration or saving faith; second, the receiving or baptism with the Holy Spirit. Paul's filling was 1) subsequent to his conversion, and 2) a conscious experience.

You have a similar pattern later when Paul arrived at Ephesus. He found some of the disciples there and asked them, "*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*" (Acts 19:2). Why did Paul ask this question? First, he was talking about the baptism with the Spirit when he mentioned the receiving of the Spirit. After all, if they had believed, they would already have the Holy Spirits. We cannot believe a part from the Holy Spirit (John 6:44). Paul could see that a genuine work of regeneration had begun in them. Second, had they "received" the Spirit, they would know it; they would remember it. Receiving the Spirit is a conscious experience. Passive though it is, it is conscious. Third, Paul accepts the obvious fact that they were true believers. He was not questioning whether they were believers; he was questioning whether they had received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Paul accepts it as a given that they had believed. They were regenerate. It was what John Calvin called "implicit" faith - when their understanding was limited but their hearts fully open to what they had heard. Calvin called implicit faith, true faith. This is the way he described the women of Samaria who had fully embraced Jesus but was lacking in understanding (John 4). This was exactly the state of these people at Ephesus. They were believers. They were regenerate. They had a lot to learn. They had not received the baptism with the Spirit. They were hungry. Open. Eager. The proof of this: as soon as Paul told them the next step forward, they accepted his word with open hands. "*When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied*" (Acts 19:6).

This brings up the issue whether speaking in tongues is a necessary "sign" that one has been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues characterized the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:4), Cornelius (Acts 10:46), and the twelve men at Ephesus (Acts 19:6). Nothing is said of speaking in tongues when Peter and John prayed for the people of Samaria (Acts 8:17) or when Paul received the Spirit (Acts 9:18). This does not mean that the Samaritans didn't speak in tongues. Most Pentecostals or charismatics would say they did even though the word does not say it explicitly. Nor does it mean that Paul did not speak in tongues when Ananias prayed for him. He may have. We certainly know he did later (1 Corinthians 14:18). Most Pentecostals and charismatics believe that the baptism with the Spirit is always accompanied with speaking in tongues. They call it the "initial physical evidence". According to them, if you don't speak in tongues, you have not been Spirit-filled. Unfortunately there are even extremists in that realm that will preach that you're not saved if you don't speak in tongues. This is not scriptural - at all. The term Spirit-filled is often an expression charismatics and Pentecostals used for people who speak in tongues.

There are sincere Christian people who may not speak in tongues. Cut them some slack all you tongue-speakers.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is 1) Conscious 2) It is usually subsequent to a person having believed 3) It is the highest form of assurance.

D.L. Moody was walking down the streets of Brooklyn, New York, when one day unexpectedly the Spirit of God came down on him. The experience was so powerful that Moody actually thought he would die. He said, "I asked God to stay His hands" lest he die right on the spot. It was that powerful. God can certainly do that for you.

Can one hasten the coming of the Spirit? Some would say Yes! - Just go for it. Some would even encourage you to "work it up". One might succeed but down the road in times of testing the enemy could make a person like that doubt and come to despair. You surely don't want strange fire. Some receive passively, others demonstrably. You may have to seek it. You may have to wait. But don't encourage the counterfeit to come along. There's plenty of that floating around. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is real. You don't need to "work it up". When you seek God with all your heart, you will find Him. *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you (Jeremiah 29:13-14). "Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9).*

God is never too late, never too early, but always just on time.

Two things often proceed the coming of the Spirit. First, a deep hunger. A yearning. A longing for the Holy Spirit to come. It is God's way of testing you to see how important He is to you. Second, although I do not want to push this too far, do not be surprised if there is a bit of suffering - just enough that it may drive you to your knees. It is often God's way of getting your attention. Here is a verse that has meant a lot to me in this connection: *"And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen."* (1 Peter 5:10)

All the glory belongs to Him.

I pray you're willing to throw religious ideology to the wind and your hunger be stirred to pursue His presence and this gift.

Grace and peace to you all.

Chief

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