

## **Baptize You in the Holy Spirit**

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Some understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit to refer to a phenomenon attested on a limited number of occasions in the first century prior to A.D. 70. Others believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is still available and needed today. Indeed, claims are made that regularly people are baptized in the Holy Spirit in church services of certain groups of believers. Still others believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place every time a Great Commission baptism takes place. Which view is correct?

### **The Prediction of John**

John's prediction of the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs in all four Gospels (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:26). Matthew's account is the most complete.

#### **A. Context of the Prediction.**

John the Baptist introduced the concept of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. His prediction was triggered by many Pharisees and Sadducees who had come to his baptism (Mt 3:7). John burst forth in a blistering denunciation of these religious hypocrites. He shot down the claims of these men to have standing with God because of their ancestry (Mt 3:9). He urged them to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance (Mt 3:8). John warned these leaders of judgment against them that already had been set in motion. He used two metaphors to describe this judgment, viz., the ax and the fire. *The ax [of divine judgment] already is laid at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that is not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into fire* (Mt 3:10).

After he denounced the hypocrites, pled for repentance, and warned of judgment, John announced the Coming One who was stronger than he—one whose sandals John did not feel worthy to bear. The reference is without question to Christ. John said: *I indeed baptize you in water to repentance...he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

Following the mention of this future baptism (or baptisms) John continued on with a metaphor of judgment (Mt 3:12). Like a farmer on the threshing floor, Christ has his fan in his hand. The fan was a long wooden fork used to toss grain into the air so that the chaff was blown away from the wheat. The good grain was then gathered into the barn; the chaff was burned. The wheat in this metaphor refers to the saved, the chaff to the unsaved. The fire in which the chaff is burned is *unquenchable*, suggesting that eschatological judgment is in view.

#### **B. Recipients of Holy Spirit Baptism.**

In the prediction of Holy Spirit baptism to whom does the pronoun *you* refer? Obviously it refers to those who were in John's audience. John was preaching to a mixed

audience. Many in his audience had responded to John's message by confessing their sins and being baptized (Mt 3:5-6). Also in the audience were religious leaders (Mt 3:7) who questioned John's credentials and rejected his baptism (Mt 21:25). Clearly it was not this wicked crowd who would be baptized in the Holy Spirit! Did John mean that all those who confessed their sins and received *his* baptism would be baptized in the Holy Spirit? Perhaps. Matthew's account cannot help us narrow the candidates for Holy Spirit baptism any further than to say that it must have been either all of those who had become John's disciples, or some portion of that group.

### **C. Purpose of Holy Spirit Baptism.**

Does John's prediction yield any insight as to the reason that Christ would baptize in the Holy Spirit? Yes it does. It may be going beyond the evidence to say on the basis of this text that Holy Spirit baptism is superior to water baptism. One could argue that Holy Spirit baptism is superior to *John's* baptism, not water baptism per se. Both John's baptism and Holy Spirit baptism play an important role in God's program, and trying to declare one superior to the other is like declaring an apple superior to an orange. In John's prediction it is not one *baptism* that is superior to the other, but the future *baptizer* that is superior to the present *baptizer*, viz., John.

The text makes clear that one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit is superior to one who baptizes in water. Therefore, one of the reasons that Christ will baptize in the Holy Spirit is to demonstrate his superiority to John. The baptism then signaled that the age of kingdom preparation (that culminated in John's baptism) was over. Holy Spirit baptism heralded the arrival of the messianic kingdom.

There is yet one other clue in the Matthew text about why Christ will baptize in the Holy Spirit. John's prediction of this baptism is surrounded on both sides by threats of judgment. Judgment *fire* is mentioned in Mt 3:10 and Mt 3:12. This makes it very likely that the *fire* mentioned in conjunction with Holy Spirit baptism in Mt 3:11 is also judgment fire. So the prediction of Holy Spirit baptism is surrounded by references to judgment. This, it seems to me, makes it very likely that Holy Spirit baptism has something to do with judgment. But how are the two connected?

Certainly those whom John envisioned receiving Holy Spirit baptism would not be experiencing judgment. So Holy Spirit baptism must be connected with judgment in the sense that it is a warning sign of judgment. A warning sign to whom? It was the presence of the unbelieving Jewish leaders—the Sadducees and Pharisees—that triggered John's prediction about Holy Spirit baptism. Therefore, it seems reasonable to me that Holy Spirit baptism may have been a warning sign to unbelieving Jews. If indeed Holy Spirit baptism was to usher in the messianic kingdom, then those Jews who did not heed the sign and submit to the messiahship of Jesus faced the ultimate judgment by fire.

One other implication can be gleaned from Matthew's account. If the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism was to (1) display the superiority of Jesus; (2) indicate the arrival of the messianic kingdom; and (3) warn unbelieving Jews of impending judgment, then one

must conclude that the evidence of Holy Spirit baptism needed to be visible, convincing, and impressive. This being the case, any thought that every Great Commission baptism that takes place is an example of the Holy Spirit baptism predicted by John is out of the question.

### **The Promise of Jesus**

The promise of Jesus regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit expands upon the prediction of John in at least three ways: (1) it narrows the circle of recipients; (2) introduces the concept of power; and (3) ties Holy Spirit baptism to a previous promise that Jesus made to his disciples.

#### **A. Context of Jesus' Promise.**

After his resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples over a period of forty days, both in Judea and in Galilee. The setting for Acts 1 is the Jerusalem area. Jesus was giving his last teaching to the apostles whom he had chosen. The general topic of this teaching was *the kingdom of God* (Acts 1:3). As part of that teaching Jesus commanded the apostles that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait there for the promise of the Father. Jesus reminded them that he had spoken to them concerning this promise on some previous occasion (Acts 1:4).

Jesus links the promise of the Father with Holy Spirit baptism in Acts 1:5. *John indeed baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*

Following Jesus' promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the disciples asked a question about the kingdom in relation to Israel. Apparently Jesus considered the question as a distraction and perhaps inappropriate in the light of all of his teaching about the kingdom (Acts 1:6-7).

In Acts 1:8 Jesus brings the minds of the apostles back to the subject that he introduced in 1:4, viz., what will transpire in Jerusalem in a few days. He said: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the extremity of the earth.* Having said these words, Jesus ascended into heaven.

#### **B. Recipients of the Promise.**

A careful study of Acts 1 indicates that it was the apostles alone who were told to tarry in Jerusalem and wait for a special event. This event is alluded to in the phrases (1) *promise of the Father*, (2) *you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit*, and (3) *when the Holy Spirit comes on you*. So the context of Acts 1 clarifies the issue of the recipients of Holy Spirit baptism in John's prediction in Mt 3. The allusion to John's baptism in Acts 1:5 is probably intended to (1) introduce a contrast to the previous baptism the twelve had

received from John; and (2) tie the impending event to John's prediction in Mt 3.

### **C. Nature of the Baptism.**

The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles has to do with empowerment. They would receive power, and that power would enable them to engage in world-wide witness. Acts makes it clear that the apostles were the official witnesses of the resurrection. This fact explains why the candidate for the apostolic replacement for Judas had to have been a follower of Jesus *from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us* (Acts 1:21-22). Peter declared that the person selected by the Lord from among the qualified candidates was to become *a witness of the resurrection with us*, i.e., with the eleven apostles. Matthias was selected and he was *reckoned with the eleven apostles* (Acts 1:26). On several occasions in Acts Peter made reference to the witness of the apostles to the resurrection (2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41).

In practical terms, in what did this apostolic empowerment to witness consist? The answer can be derived from two sources: (1) the promises of Jesus; and (2) the performance of the apostles.

Jesus linked the baptismal coming of the Holy Spirit to matters he had taught the apostles earlier in his ministry. Most likely he was referring especially to things he taught the apostles in the upper room and en route to Gethsemane as recorded in John 13-17. In this speech Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit will teach them all things. He will bring to their remembrance all things that Jesus had said unto them (Jn 14:26). The Spirit of truth will bear witness to Christ (Jn 15:26); he will reprove the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn 16:8). The Holy Spirit will guide the apostles into all truth (Jn 16:13-14).

In the performance of the apostles, one senses insightfulness and boldness. Peter's exposition of the law, the prophets and the psalms in his discourse in Acts 2 and elsewhere is not likely the result of personal Bible study. As for boldness, even the enemies of the Lord marveled at the boldness of Peter and John (Acts 4:13).

### **The Portrayal by Luke**

Ten days after Jesus made his promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit the event took place. Luke describes the event in dramatic fashion. The apostles were still in Jerusalem when the Jewish feast of Pentecost arrived. Suddenly there came a sound from heaven that sounded like a rushing mighty wind. It filled the place where *they* [the apostles] were sitting in one of the rooms off the temple courtyard (Acts 2:2). There appeared to *them* [the apostles] *fire being distributed as tongues of fire that sat on each one of them* (Acts 2:3). At that moment *they* [the apostles] *were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak out*. Those Jews present in the temple courts from all parts of the Roman world heard the apostles speaking each in his own native language (Acts 2:6). The miracle

produced the desired effect of wonderment in the observers (Acts 2:7). Still, the audience was perplexed as to the meaning of this demonstration, and some were belittling it (Acts 2:12-13). The entire event required an explanation. Peter stood up to provide it (Acts 2:14).

Can there be any doubt that this event described by Luke in the opening verses of Acts 2 is the baptism of the Holy Spirit predicted by John and promised by Jesus? It happened to the right people (the apostles), at the right time (not many days after Jesus made his promise) and in the right place (Jerusalem). Cf. Acts 1:5. It had the right result—*power* that enabled the apostles to begin their public testimony (cf. Acts 1:8). It also served as a warning sign to Jews who did not yet believe, albeit a sign that needed explanation.

In 1 Cor 14:22 Paul explained the judicial meaning of the sign of speaking in unlearned languages: *Wherefore tongues are a sign, not for believing ones, but for unbelievers*. What kind of sign is it? Paul cites Isaiah 28:11: *In other tongues and lips I will speak to this people; and yet for all that they will not hear me* (1 Cor 14:21). The context of the Isaiah prophecy is one of threatened judgment on the Jewish nation. The immediate application of Isaiah's prophecy is to the Assyrian invasion of Judah. But the principle established is timeless. When God speaks to Jews in foreign tongues, he signals the impending destruction of their nation.

Since we have only an abbreviated account of what transpired on Pentecost, it would be impossible to say whether or not Peter explained the judicial function of the sign that was being displayed. But in his Pentecost sermon Peter certainly alluded to the impending destruction of the Jewish nation. His appeal to *be saved from this perverse generation* (Acts 2:40) was reinforced by the sign that had been witnessed by all who were present. Many of those Jews were advanced students of prophetic literature. They may have made the same linkage to Isaiah 28:11 that Paul later made in 1 Cor 14:22. Paul does not suggest in 1 Cor 14:22 that he is delivering some new revelation. His statement regarding the significance of tongues in the light of Isaiah 28:11 may have been standard Christian interpretation of the phenomenon.

### **Proclamation by Peter**

Peter began his Pentecost discourse by refuting the charge that the twelve apostles were drunk (Acts 2:15). He explained what the temple visitors had witnessed by declaring it to be the fulfillment of a prophecy uttered by Joel some eight hundred years before Christ. Joel had predicted: *It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams*. God immediately qualified this generality by stipulating that *on my servants and on my handmaids I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy* (Acts 2:17-18). So those who will engage in the prophetic activity in the last days are God's servants, both male and female.

By citing these verses from Joel, Peter was declaring that *the last days* anticipated by Old Testament prophets had arrived. The messianic age—the Christian dispensation—constitutes the last days referred to in Old Testament prophecy. The verb *pour* points to the abundant measure in which God dispenses his Spirit.

In his exposition of Joel 2 Peter goes on to cite the prediction of judgment signs that follow the pouring out of the Spirit but which precede the great and notable day of the Lord: *I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke* (Acts 2:19). Joel spoke of turning *the sun to darkness and the moon to blood* (Acts 2:20). Peter does not interpret the meaning of these signs, and this issue need not divert us in the present study. Suffice it to say that Peter equated the pouring out of the Spirit in Joel with what had transpired on Pentecost. In the light of John's prediction and Jesus' promise what transpired on Pentecost must be identified with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As in John's prediction (Mt 3) Joel links the pouring out of the Spirit—baptism of the Holy Spirit—with judgment. While the baptism of the Spirit may have been a wonderful and beneficial experience to those who received it, the baptism served as a warning sign to those who witnessed it.

Peter seems to connect the wonders and signs of Joel's prophecy with the miracles, wonders and signs that Jesus performed in the midst of the Jewish people (Acts 2:22).

Peter goes on to prove that the Scriptures anticipated the death, resurrection and ascension of Messiah (Acts 2:25-32). He then asserted: *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you now see and hear* (Acts 2:33). So the Old Testament promises of the coming of the Holy Spirit (e.g., Joel's prediction) and Jesus' promise regarding the Spirit's coming were in reality the same promise. The Father placed the execution of that promise in the hands of his exalted Son. In Joel it is God who pours out his Spirit; here it is Christ. The statement of Peter constitutes a strong claim for the deity of Christ.

In Joel it is the Spirit who is poured out. But Peter says Christ poured out this *which you now see and hear*. The baptism of the Holy Spirit cannot, therefore, be isolated from the phenomena that accompanied the outpouring. When the baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place, observable signs are present.

How does *the gift of the Holy Spirit* in Acts 2:38 relate to Holy Spirit baptism? Peter told the Pentecost crowd to *repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*. He promised that those who complied with these terms of pardon would receive *the gift* (Gk. *dorea*) *of the Holy Spirit*. This gift is the Holy Spirit himself. Certainly Peter is not promising that all who are baptized receive the so-called spiritual gifts (Gk. *charisma*). The gift received by the new converts was the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

It is strange exegesis that sees in *the gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:38) a reference to Holy Spirit baptism. At least four facts argue against this identification:

1. In the foundational texts dealing with Holy Spirit baptism, neither John nor Jesus referred to this distribution of the Spirit as a *gift*.

2. Holy Spirit baptism already had taken place at the time Peter spoke of *the gift of the Holy Spirit*.

3. Had Peter been referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit he surely would have indicated such by saying you *also* shall receive *the gift of the Holy Spirit*.

4. If Holy Spirit baptism *is* Great Commission baptism, or takes place *simultaneously* with Great Commission baptism, then there is no record that the apostles ever were baptized in the Holy Spirit. This seems very strange, since it was to the apostles alone that Jesus promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

### **Samaritan Impartation**

During the ministry of Philip in Samaria an incident took place that might be reckoned as another instance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many Samaritans, including a notable public figure named Simon, had believed the gospel and had been baptized. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to assist in the work.

Luke reports that Peter and John *prayed* concerning the Samaritan Christians *so that they might receive the Holy Spirit* (Acts 8:15). If the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs in conjunction with Great Commission baptism, the language of Luke is difficult to explain. Had the Samaritans already been baptized in the Holy Spirit at the time Peter and John prayed for them? If Holy Spirit baptism occurs at the time of Great Commission baptism, was that baptism for some reason delayed in the case of the Samaritans? Or is it more reasonable to understand that the Samaritans had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit before the arrival of the apostles. If the Samaritan Christians had been baptized with Great Commission baptism, but had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit does this not refute the doctrine that the two baptisms occur simultaneously?

Acts 8:16 explains in what sense these Christians had not yet *received* the Holy Spirit: *For he had not yet fallen on any one of them; but they only had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*. Being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus is clearly a reference to Great Commission baptism. The Holy Spirit *falling* on someone seems to be equivalent to the *pouring out* of the Spirit in Acts 2:17, 18, 33). If the *falling* of the Spirit and the *pouring out* of the Spirit are not the same, wherein is the difference? If the *pouring out* of the Spirit is linked with being *baptized in the Spirit* by Acts 1:5, then surely one must conclude that the Samaritan Christians, though baptized in water, had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

After praying for the Samaritans, Peter and John laid their hands on them, and *they received the Holy Spirit* (Acts 8:17) in the sense of the *falling* of the Spirit stipulated

in the previous verse. The results must have been visible to all, for Simon *saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given* (Acts 8:18). In other words, there was visible and/or audible proof that the Holy Spirit had now fallen on these Christians. Simon must have witnessed something similar to what the Pentecost crowd witnessed when the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

What function did Holy Spirit baptism serve in the case of the Samaritans? Presumably the deep-seated Jewish prejudice toward the Samaritans needed to be addressed. Philip had immersed these people into Christ; but would the fledgling church accept them as equal participants in the life of the Church? Holy Spirit baptism quickly established the unique authority of the apostles in that region, as Simon was quick to observe (Acts 8:18). It also served as irrefutable proof that God had accepted Samaritan conversion as genuine and therefore unchallengeable by Jewish believers. Once again the underlying threat against the Jewish nation may also be part of the reason for falling of the Spirit on the Samaritans. No Jewish Christian, hearing of what transpired in Samaria, could think that he had special standing with God just because of his Jewishness.

### **The Household of Cornelius**

Cornelius was a Gentile, a Roman soldier. He had been directed by an angel to send for Peter who had words that would lead to salvation (Acts 11:14). While Peter was preaching to those gathered in Cornelius' house, *the Holy Spirit fell on all those hearing the discourse* (Acts 10:44). This language is a clear link to what transpired with the Samaritan Christians after the laying on of the apostles' hands in Acts 8:16-17. The *falling* of the Spirit is equivalent to the *pouring out* of the Spirit in Acts 2, which is described in advance by Jesus as being *baptized* in the Spirit in Acts 1:5. The linkage between the falling of the Spirit and the pouring out of the Spirit is made crystal clear by the words of Luke: *On the Gentiles also has been poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 10:45). The Jewish believers who accompanied Peter had no doubt as to what had transpired for *they heard them speak with languages, and magnify God* (Acts 10:46). Thus it is clear from Luke's language that the household of Cornelius was baptized in the Holy Spirit prior to receiving Great Commission baptism.

Having witnessed the household of Cornelius being baptized in the Holy Spirit, Peter *commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord* (Acts 10:48). We can conclude that (1) Holy Spirit baptism is no substitute for Great Commission baptism; and (2) the two baptisms are distinct. If one were to suggest that Cornelius' household were baptized in the Holy Spirit when they were baptized in water, then we would be encountering two Holy Spirit baptisms in succession on the same candidates.

In Acts 11 Peter rehearses before a skeptical audience the events of Acts 10. He brings out a couple of new points that have a bearing on this study. Peter said: *As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning* (Acts 11:15). The word *fell* links what happened to Cornelius to what happened to the Samaritans in Acts 8:16-17. The phrase *as on us at the beginning* links what happened to Cornelius to what happened on Pentecost. At the risk of sounding repetitious, Acts 11:15 nails down the

fact that the *pouring out* of the Spirit, the *falling* of the Spirit, and being *baptized in the Spirit* are expressions referring to the same phenomenon in the Book of Acts.

When Peter saw that what had happened to the apostles on Pentecost was happening to Gentiles, he recalled the promise of Jesus in Acts 1:5 that the apostles were to *baptized with the Holy Spirit*. Clearly Peter is saying that what happened to Cornelius was the equivalent of the baptism of the Holy Spirit experienced by the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

But to whom did Peter refer when he said *on us at the beginning*? To whom does the pronoun refer? Some would argue that the *us* refers to Jewish Christians. But there are two reasons to interpret the pronoun *us* in Acts 11:15 as a reference to the apostles. First, Peter uses the pronoun *us* ten times prior to 11:15 in Acts. In each case, the reference appears to be to the *apostles*. Second, since it was only upon the apostles that the Spirit was poured out on Pentecost, the *us* in 11:15 must refer to the apostles.

If the pronoun *us* in 11:15 refers to the apostles, surely the same pronoun in 11:17 must also refer to the apostles. Peter said: *God gave them [the Gentiles] the equivalent gift as he also gave to us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ*. At the time the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. They had not received Great Commission baptism. At the point in Peter's sermon to the household of Cornelius when the Spirit fell, the Gentiles believed also. The God who knows the hearts and minds of men confirmed their faith by pouring out upon them the Holy Spirit. This is the *like gift* or equivalent gift *that God gave us [apostles] in the beginning*.

The correspondence between what happened to Cornelius and what happened to the apostles on Pentecost is threefold: (1) both groups were in the same spiritual state in that they were believers; (2) in both instances the Spirit was poured out directly from heaven; and (3) in both instances the result was praising God in unlearned languages. In view of the miraculous confirmation of the genuine faith of the Gentiles, Peter justified the authorization of Great Commission baptism by saying: *who was I to be able to hinder God* (Acts 11:17).

The use of the word *gift* in Acts 11:17 in no way establishes that *gift of the Holy Spirit* in Acts 2:38 refers to Holy Spirit baptism. The *gift* of which Peter speaks in Acts 11:17 came upon the apostles and on Cornelius' household independent of Great Commission baptism. The *gift of the Holy Spirit* in Acts 2:38 is a promise to all those who receive Great Commission baptism. Thus the terminology *gift of the Holy Spirit* refers to any bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

The prophet Ezekiel announced the day when God would *restore the fortunes* of Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem (Ezek 16:53-58). The best commentators regard this prediction as pointing to the inclusion of Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles (Sodom) in the messianic kingdom. How appropriate, then, that God ratified the fulfillment of this prophecy by the dramatic outpouring (baptism) of the Holy Spirit upon Jewish apostles, Samaritans and the household of a Gentile soldier.

## John's Disciples in Ephesus

When Paul came to Ephesus on his third missionary journey, he encountered certain disciples of John the Baptist. They must have believed in Christ, but Paul suspected that their faith was not complete. He asked them if they had *received* the Holy Spirit since they believed. They had heard nothing about the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2). Since Great Commission baptism is administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and since Christian teaching holds that those who are baptized receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, Paul inquired about their baptism. The men had submitted to John's baptism, but not Great Commission baptism (Acts 19:3). Paul pointed out to them that John's baptism was only preparatory. Those who followed John's teachings were to put their faith in Christ Jesus, i.e., were to acknowledge that Jesus was Christ by submitting to his baptism (Acts 19:4). When the twelve men heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, i.e., they submitted to Great Commission baptism (Acts 19:5).

The word *received* (Acts 19:2) links this incident to what happened to the Samaritans in Acts 8:14-15, 17. Paul repeated what Peter and John did for the newly baptized Samaritan Christians in Acts 8. He laid his hands on the twelve men. At that moment *the Holy Spirit came upon them*. The fact of the Spirit's coming was immediately recognized by those who witnessed the incident for *they spoke with languages, and prophesied* (Acts 19:6). The incident established that the authority of Paul was equal to that of Peter and John in Acts 8. It also demonstrated Jesus' superiority to John, and the actual existence of the kingdom that John had preached about.

There are four parallels to the incident in Samaria: (1) those involved had received Great Commission baptism; (2) prior to the incident the candidates had not *received* the Holy Spirit; (3) an apostle laid his hands on the candidates; and (4) the reception of the Holy Spirit was physically verifiable, although in the Samaritan incident the precise manifestations are not indicated. On the basis of these parallels it seems safe to say that here is yet another occasion of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

## Baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13

Paul speaks of a baptism in which the one Spirit (presumably the Holy Spirit) is the medium in which, by which, or with which (possible translations of the Gr. preposition *en*) unity exists in the body of Christ. *We* (all Christians) *were baptized into one body*. This verse is commonly used to argue that all Christians are baptized in the Holy Spirit. But such a conclusion is based on superficial exegesis. While there is a coincidence of language with the prediction of John in Mt 3, and with the promise of Jesus in Acts 1, a closer examination of the context indicates that this passage has nothing whatever to do with the previous passages examined in this study. The number of differences between the baptism of 1 Cor 12:13 and the baptism John predicted and Jesus promised offset the coincidence of language.

1. On the most obvious level, 1 Cor 12:13 was written by Paul. These are not the

words of John the Baptist, of Jesus or of Luke, the author of Acts. Similarity of language naturally causes one to entertain the *possibility* that in 1 Cor 12:13 Paul is interpreting John or Jesus, or at least is expanding upon their statements about Holy Spirit baptism. But 1 Cor 12:13 comes from a different writer/speaker. This should alert us to the *possibility* that similar language may not in this case refer to the same phenomenon. Hermeneutic books offer several examples where similar—even identical—language is used with different connotations by different writers, and sometimes even by the same writer.

2. The context of the reference to baptism in 1 Cor 12:13 has nothing in common with the context of the Holy Spirit baptism of Mt 3 or Acts 1. In Corinthians Paul is talking about the functioning of the church. The church is certainly not in the foreground in either the prediction of John or in the promise of Jesus.

3. The baptizer is specifically identified in Mt 3 as Jesus: *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire*. The baptism of the Holy Spirit that transpired on Pentecost is likewise attributed to Jesus by Peter (Acts 2:33). But here in 1 Cor 12:13 there is no direct reference to Jesus as the baptizer. In this chapter it is the Holy Spirit who is the active agent in vv. 3, 8, 9, and 11. This, then, makes it quite likely that the *one Spirit* in 1 Cor 12:13 is the baptizer, not the one in whom all Christians are baptized.

4. Those who are identified as candidates for Holy Spirit baptism in Mt 3 are referred to by an ambiguous pronoun, *you*. But in Acts 1 Jesus narrows that *you* down to the apostles. In 1 Cor 12:13, however, it is all Christians who have been baptized by the Spirit into the one body.

5. The objective of the baptism predicted by John and promised by Jesus was Christological, i.e., it attested to superiority of Jesus. It specifically was offered as proof by Peter that Christ had ascended to the right hand of the Father. That baptism also had a judicial objective in that it warned of judgment to come upon unbelieving Jews. The baptism to which Paul refers, however, is soteriological in purpose, i.e., it refers to the incorporation of redeemed sinners into the body of Christ. It also has an ecclesiological purpose in that it accounts for the unity of the body.

In the paragraphs above I argued that Cornelius experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit before he was baptized in water. If we say that Paul is referring in 1 Cor 12:13 to the same Holy Spirit baptism experienced by Cornelius, then we would be compelled to say that Cornelius was incorporated into the body of Christ before he obeyed Peter's command to be baptized in water. This is exactly the line of argument advanced by Baptist expositors. Sinners are baptized in or by the Holy Spirit the instant they believe; therefore Great Commission baptism is nothing more than a visible symbol of what in reality already has taken place. Some in our movement are arguing that Holy Spirit baptism takes place in conjunction with Great Commission baptism. In the Cornelius episode this view of 1 Cor 12:13 would necessitate *two* Holy Spirit baptisms, one before and one in conjunction with his water baptism.

5. The result of the baptism predicted by John and promised by Jesus was that observable supernatural signs followed. In three of the four instances (Pentecost, John's disciples, Cornelius) the sign was speaking in unlearned languages. In the case of the Samaritans the precise manifestation is not identified, but it most likely was the same sign. What follows the baptism by one Spirit in 1 Cor 12:13 is the unity of the church.

For these reasons it is my judgment that the baptism of 1 Cor 12:13 has nothing whatever to do with the baptism predicted by John and promised by Jesus. It seems to me that Paul is talking about Great Commission baptism as the moment when a sinner, having been forgiven of his sins, is incorporated into the body of Christ. Calling this *Holy Spirit baptism* is both misleading and confusing for it fails to maintain the clear distinction between the baptism of the Holy Spirit as predicted by John and promised by Jesus on the one hand, and Great Commission baptism on the other hand.

But in what sense is Great Commission baptism accomplished by the Holy Spirit? Great Commission baptism is performed in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit through accredited messengers commands this baptism. He also reveals in the New Testament the significance of this baptism. The gift of the Holy Spirit imparted at baptism appears to be the indwelling presence of the Spirit. That may be what Paul is alluding to metaphorically in 1 Cor 12:13 when he speaks of being *given the one Spirit to drink* (cf. Jn 4:14; 7:38-39). So we are baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit, by an agent of the Holy Spirit in order that we might receive the gift of the same Spirit. This is sufficient to explain *baptized by one Spirit into one body*. Paul saw more to baptism than a mere physical act. There is a spiritual dimension there perhaps too profound for human understanding.

### Summary

The baptism of the Holy Spirit predicted by John and promised by Jesus accomplished four things.

1. Christologically, Holy Spirit baptism confirms the reign of Christ from his heavenly throne over his kingdom, thus his superiority to John.

2. In all four of the recorded instances, Holy Spirit baptism credentialed the authority of the apostles. This is clear on Pentecost. The Samaritans and John's disciples received Holy Spirit baptism through the mediation of the apostles. In the case of Cornelius, Holy Spirit baptism credentialed the authority of Peter in ordering the Great Commission baptism of Gentiles for the first time.

3. In terms of the recipients, Holy Spirit baptism served the purpose of confirmation of the presence of genuine faith prior to Great Commission baptism (apostles on Pentecost; Cornelius) or genuine salvation following Great Commission baptism (Samaritans; John's disciples).

4. In terms of witnesses (or those who heard of the incidents) Holy Spirit baptism had a judicial function. It served as a warning to unbelieving Jews of the impending destruction of their nation.

Holy Spirit baptism is not a prerequisite for Great Commission baptism, nor is it something that regularly accompanies Great Commission baptism. Certainly it is doctrine not based on sound exegesis to teach that all believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit in the sense of John's prediction and Jesus' promise. Holy Spirit baptism as identified above is a special manifestation of God's Spirit given to a limited number of people in a very narrow chronological window (before A.D. 70) and for these reasons is only tangentially related to personal salvation.