

LESSON 9

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

When I was about ten years old, I attended Kids' Camp at Green Lane, Pennsylvania, the home of Eastern Bible Institute (now Valley Forge Christian College). My memories of the spiritual atmosphere at Kids' Camp are vivid—exuberant singing, passionate preaching, and extended prayer times in the old-fashioned prayer room behind the platform. No carpet, only hard wooden floors and splintery wooden benches. As a young boy I knew about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. My pastor-father preached about the Spirit often. My Sunday School teachers taught about this blessing, too. I wanted to receive this promised gift more than anything at that time.

One night I prayed long and hard following the preaching. It was past midnight, and the snack shop was closed. While the other campers were in their cabins, my counselor prayed for me as I was trying hard to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I prayed so long that my knees were sore and tired. I then rolled onto my back and continued crying out to God. I so desperately wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit that I started kicking my legs, like a champion backstroke swimmer.

I laugh now as I think about what the counselor must have been thinking. After allowing me to kick my legs for just a couple of minutes, the counselor asked me why I was doing that. "So I can be filled with the Holy Spirit," I replied. Not long before then, during the Sunday evening altar time at my home church in Windsor, Pennsylvania, I had seen a man on his back near the altar; he was praying in other tongues and kicking his legs. I figured if I kicked my legs hard and long enough I, too, would be filled with the Spirit and speak in tongues.

The counselor was wise. He gently told me that I could stop kicking my legs and relax. He reminded me that Jesus would fill me with the Holy Spirit if I simply yielded to Him.

I closed my eyes, took a deep breath, raised my hands to heaven, and praised Jesus. Almost immediately Jesus baptized me in the Holy Spirit, and I began to speak in tongues. What a joy it has been for me to live through the power and wisdom of the Spirit! Every follower of Christ can receive the blessing in the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is God's promise to each of us (Acts 2:38–39).

LESSON OUTLINE

The Holy Spirit's Identity

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Old and New Testament References to Spirit Baptism

The Day of Pentecost

Fundamental Distinctions

How to Receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The Initial Physical Evidence

LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: Describe who the Holy Spirit is and what He does.*
- 2: Explain what is the baptism in the Holy Spirit.*
- 3: Identify references to the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments.*
- 4: Summarize what happened on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2.*

- 5: *Identify the essential differences between salvation and the baptism in the Holy Spirit and between water and Spirit baptism.*
- 6: *Explain how to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.*
- 7: *Relate the importance of speaking in tongues.*

The Holy Spirit's Identity

Objective 1:

Describe who the Holy Spirit is and what He does.

Very briefly I would like to review some of what was covered in Lesson 8 of this discipleship course. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead—a distinct, divine person. He is holy, that is pure and separate from sin. He is a Spirit. The Hebrew word for *spirit* is “ruah” or “ruach” (Ezekiel 37:1). The Greek word is “pneuma” (Acts 1:8). Both mean “breath” or “wind.” The Holy Spirit, then, is “The breath or the wind of One who is separate.”

The Holy Spirit is divine

The Holy Spirit is divine (Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 3:16). Ascribed to Him are the attributes of God: life-giving (Romans 8:2), possessing the truth (John 16:13), having perfect love (Romans 15:30), holy (Ephesians 4:30), eternal (Hebrews 9:14), and omnipresent (Psalm 139:7). The Holy Spirit does the works of God. He creates (Genesis 1:2), casts out demons (Matthew 12:28), convicts of sin (John 16:8), regenerates (John 3:8), and resurrects (Romans 8:11).

The Holy Spirit possesses personality

Followers of God have not always viewed the Holy Spirit as being a Person. For instance, the ancient Jewish concept of God's Spirit was that of a powerful yet impersonal force (McGee and Burgess 1988, 801). However, the New Testament teaches clearly that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person with characteristics

of personhood. He possesses a mind, intelligence, knowledge (Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11), and a will (Acts 16:6–7). He speaks (Acts 8:29; 11:12), loves (Romans 15:30), and can be grieved, vexed, blasphemed, insulted or outraged (Matthew 12:31; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 10:29). No impersonal force, such as electricity, lightning, water, or wind, can demonstrate such emotions. Nor do these impersonal forces have knowledge and a will. Furthermore, as a person, the Holy Spirit is referred to in the masculine gender. John writes, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth” (16:13).

Works of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin and produces spiritual life.

The Holy Spirit makes known to us what Jesus has done for us (John 16:15). He convicts us of our sin, of Christ’s righteousness, and of God’s judgment of Satan (John 16:8–11; 1 John 3:8). The Holy Spirit also produces spiritual life in us (Romans 8:1–2). Before we accepted Christ, we were dead in sin. But after salvation, the Holy Spirit assures us that we are children of God (Romans 8:16).

The Holy Spirit also brings forth fruits of righteousness in believers’ lives (Galatians 5:22–23). The fruit of the Spirit cannot be produced by self-effort, but grows when we allow the indwelling Spirit to take control and produce His fruit in our lives.

The Holy Spirit makes us holy.

The Holy Spirit gives us power over our human, fleshly nature (Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:13). Every Christ follower must fight the battle between our spiritual nature and our human, fleshly nature.

When our middle child, Jonathan, who is now a young adult, was nine, I tucked him into bed one night. After prayer Jonathan said, “There’s a war going on in my mouth.”

“What do you mean, ‘a war’?” I asked.

He said, "There's a war going on between my cough and the cough syrup."

"Who is winning the war?" I pressed.

"Right now the cough is winning, but eventually the cough syrup will win," he replied confidently.

He kept talking: "Carman has a song about battles. In his song he says that we may lose some of the battles, but we are going to win the war. The cough may win some of the battles, but the cough syrup is going to win this war."

This was a teaching moment, an opportunity to share with Jonathan about Paul's words to the Romans concerning the war that wages within all of us, the war between the flesh and the Spirit. It is true that as we yield to the Spirit, we are set free from the law of sin and death.

The Holy Spirit helps us pray.

The Spirit also helps us pray (Romans 8:26). Fred Cottriel, a former missionary, pastor, and Superintendent of the Southern Californian District of The Assemblies of God, experienced a miracle because the Holy Spirit prompted a woman to pray. He told this story:

It was a snowy winter day during World War II. I hadn't slept in a real bed for months. I was tired of being tired; and I was tired of being scared, wet, and cold. I was weary of losing friends to war. We were to have a short rest. My men and I took lodging in some uninhabited houses. The house I chose had a fireplace. I lit a fire, sat on a couch, and fell asleep. I dreamed I was wounded. I awoke from my dream to an order to carry some land mines to an infantry unit which needed help. The explosives were placed on my tank, and with my unit we made a breakthrough. While we were delivering the mines, the enemy began shelling our positions. I

was wounded. The mines were hit, but miraculously did not explode. When I told that story in a church after the war, a woman asked, "What date was that?" When I told her, she said, "Let me tell you the rest of the story." She was awakened by the Lord and could see my face clearly. The Spirit directed her to intercede for me. Her prayer saved my life. Thank God for her obedience and for power in prayer. (*Pentecostal Evangel*)

The Holy Spirit counsels and empowers for service.

Not only does the Holy Spirit counsel us in the truth of Christ (John 14:16–17; 16:12–13), but He also empowers and equips us for faithful service (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8, 4:31). Trying to serve God without the power of the Holy Spirit is futile.

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Objective 2:

Explain what is the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a spiritual experience that first occurred in Jerusalem ten days following Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven. The event is described vividly in Acts 2:1–4. The 120 Christians were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Other supernatural manifestations included were the sound of a violent wind filling the whole house where they had gathered and the appearance of tongues of fire that rested on each of those present.

This baptism, which is distinct from and subsequent to salvation, is available to all of Christ's followers. McGee and Burgess (1988) describe it this way: "This (baptism) signifies a total submergence within the reality of the Holy Spirit so that whoever is so baptized has a vivid sense of the Spirit's presence and power" (41).

Let us now take a closer look at the terminology in the New Testament that refers to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The different terms give us a clearer picture of what God is doing when believers experience this wonderful event.

Baptized in (or with) the Holy Spirit

Christians who are baptized in the Holy Spirit are suddenly immersed in the presence of God's Spirit in a fresh, new way (Acts 1:4–5; 11:16). Experientially, the Spirit who indwells every true believer moves upon and influences the child of God in a more powerful manner.

Outpouring of the Spirit

Perhaps you have stood outside during a downpour of rain. The rain soon drenches your hair, clothes, and shoes. In some ways, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is likened to that of physical rain. Though we cannot physically see the Holy Spirit as He is poured out on us, His effects are unmistakable (Acts 2:17–18; 2:33; 10:45–46).

Filled with the Holy Spirit

Being filled with the Spirit does not suggest that one has more of the Spirit than someone else. Rather, the Spirit who is totally present now totally claims the recipient. Another way to look at this is to consider that when a follower of Christ is baptized in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who is within is released for total inward occupancy (John 7:37–39; Acts 2:4, 9:17).

The Holy Spirit comes on individuals

The New Testament also speaks of the Holy Spirit coming on individuals and filling them. For instance, Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8). This term describes the suddenness with which the Spirit often moves upon hungry hearts. Other references to this terminology can be found in Acts 10:44 and Acts 19:6.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

The experience we know as the baptism in the Holy Spirit is also spoken of as “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). The word *gift* signifies that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is not earned by one’s following Christ or by attaining a certain level of spirituality. Like salvation, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift or blessing. We neither earn nor deserve it.

It is also important to note that the “gift of the Holy Spirit” is different from the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4–11). While the gift of the Holy Spirit describes the initial filling of the Spirit in the life of the believer, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are God-given capacities and abilities which enable the Christ-follower to minister to others.

The promise of the Holy Spirit

Peter told the seekers on the Day of Pentecost, “‘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 2:39). The word *promise* is the Greek word *epangelia*, which means “a gift graciously announced and bestowed.” A promise is a declaration of some benefit to be conferred. What a benefit the baptism in the Holy Spirit is!

For some people, promises are like pie crusts, lightly made and easily broken. But not so with God! The God who “remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham” (Psalm 105:42) is the same God who honors His promises to us. Paul affirms, “No matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

This baptism in the Holy Spirit is a promise to every believer—young, old, male, female, rich, poor, educated, uneducated, married, single, newly-saved, or mature in the faith. This gift is for all. Throughout the New Testament we have noted that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is referred to in different ways. Yet, the blessing

is the same—a total submergence into the person, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit.

Old and New Testament References to Spirit Baptism

Objective 3:

Identify references to the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments.

The prophet Joel

The Old Testament prophet Joel, writing as the Spirit inspired him, promised this blessing: “‘And afterward, 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 explaining the unusual spiritual phenomena on the Day of Pentecost, Peter said to his fellow Jews,

These men are not drunk, . . . No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.’” (Acts 2:15–18)

John the Baptist

John the Baptist promised this blessing, too. Preaching near the Jordan River, the forerunner of Christ announced, “‘I baptize you with water. . . But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, . . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire’” (Matthew 3:11).

Jesus Christ

Prior to His ascension to heaven, Jesus emphasized that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on His disciples: “I am going to send you what my Father has promised” (Luke 24:49). While eating with His disciples following His resurrection from the dead, Jesus instructed them, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about” (Acts 1:4). Jesus reiterated His promise: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8).

The Apostle Peter

We noted earlier that Peter, the fisherman turned preacher, promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to a multitude of listeners (Acts 2:38–39). This is very significant! We have four individuals—Joel, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the apostle Peter—indicating that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is for all Christians. That means you, too! May God give us the faith to believe, receive, and claim this blessing!

A personal testimony

My great grandmother, Adeline Sorbo, was an Italian immigrant to the United States in the early 1900’s. After marrying Anthony, they parented fifteen children, the oldest of whom was my grandmother, Mary. Devout Roman Catholics, the Sorbo family hitched up their horse and buggy each week to attend the mass in New Castle, Pennsylvania. It was after a friend’s untimely death in a house fire that Adeline cried out to God with great earnestness, even questioning her own eternal destiny. Then, as Adeline was washing clothes one day soon after her friend’s death, she was baptized in the Holy Spirit, filled with overwhelming joy, and began to speak in a language she did not know.

Wanting to know what this strange experience was, she prayed. Later, she heard an audible voice, “Go to where the crazy people are.” Since she was all alone when she heard that message, she surmised that God

had spoken to her. She had never heard of the “crazy people.”

While selling cheese and milk door-to-door, she would ask, “Do you know where the ‘crazy people’ are?” No one knew. But one day, a friend who went to Adeline’s farm to pick green beans said to her, “I don’t know what you are looking for, but on Lyndel Street a group of Italians are meeting in a house. They sing and pray so loudly that their neighbors call them crazy. I have gone there several times myself. If you want me to take you, I will.” Adeline went and her life was never the same. Within a short time, all of her family members came to trust Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

The Day of Pentecost

Objective 4:

Summarize what happened on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2.

On the Day of Pentecost, Jews from all over the world were gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. This feast, first mentioned in Leviticus 23:15–21, was a time of celebration in which the Jews made an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. A harvest festival, the Feast of Pentecost marked the beginning of the time when the people brought their firstfruit offerings and gave God thanks for His many provisions, for the bountiful harvest. The word *Pentecost* means “fifty.” Thus, this feast occurred fifty days after Passover.

Let us summarize what happened on the Day of Pentecost. In obedience to Jesus’ command, 120 of Christ’s followers remained in Jerusalem to pray and wait on the Lord (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–5). They did not know what to expect—only that they were going to receive fresh spiritual power. A partial listing of those present is given to us by Luke in Acts 1:13–14.

As they “all joined together constantly in prayer” (Acts 1:14), a sound came from heaven, a sound like the

blowing of a violent wind (Acts 2:2). At precisely that same moment, the praying disciples saw “what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them” (v. 3). Immediately, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and were able to speak in languages they had never learned.

Evidently, these newly-empowered believers left the prayer room and went down to the Jerusalem streets, still praising God in a variety of languages. Thousands of Jews from all over the world heard these Palestinian Jews praising God in languages not familiar to those speaking, but very familiar to those listening. “Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’” (2:12). But others ridiculed the believers, thinking they were drunk. Then, to the assembled crowd of thousands, Peter preached, explaining that what these followers of Christ were experiencing was precisely what the prophet Joel had prophesied hundreds of years before (2:14–21). Peter used that opportunity to preach about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a result, thousands “accepted his message” and were baptized (2:41). On that day the New Testament church was born. Today, those followers of Christ who embrace the same experience that the apostles received on the Day of Pentecost are called “Pentecostals.”

Primary purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit

Receiving spiritual power

Jesus made very clear the primary purpose of this powerful spiritual experience. “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). Jesus wants everyone in the world to know about His love and grace, His salvation and forgiveness. Knowing that we are often timid, He gave us this blessing to empower us to be His witnesses. The baptism in the Holy Spirit empowered and emboldened the first-century believers. The apostles who had been afraid to be associated with Jesus when He was arrested and crucified became very bold after being filled

with the Holy Spirit. Now unashamed to be identified with Christ, they courageously preached Christ at every opportunity (Acts 2–7).

Manifestations of spiritual power

As a result of this spiritual empowerment, the Spirit-filled believers of the first century enjoyed many positive spiritual by-products. Below is a summary of these blessings.

- They spoke God's Word boldly, testifying to Jesus' resurrection (3:12–16; 4:8–12; 4:31, 33; 5:42).
- They witnessed miracles of healing (3:1–10; 5:12–16).
- They had overflowing joy in the midst of difficult circumstances (5:41; 13:52).
- Their prayer life was strong (2:42; 3:1; 4:31; 12:5).

Fundamental Distinctions

Objective 5:

Identify essential differences between salvation and the baptism in the Holy Spirit and between water and Spirit baptism.

Salvation and Spirit Baptism

Salvation is the miraculous process by which individuals, by trusting in Jesus Christ alone, become children of God (Romans 10:9–10; John 1:12), receive forgiveness for their sins and accept the free gift of eternal life. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the miraculous process by which Christ's followers are immersed in the Holy Spirit, thus allowing the Holy Spirit to be released into and through the believers' lives. Though extremely important to the believer, being baptized in the Spirit is not an entrance requirement into heaven. The essential difference, then, between salvation and Spirit baptism is that while salvation allows us to begin a personal relationship with God, the baptism in the Holy Spirit provides the power for us to live the Christ life.

The Holy Spirit is fully present in the life of every believer (1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:9). However, when the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, like a river, flows through the believer (John 7:38–39), thus infusing him or her with the wisdom, presence, and language of the Spirit.

Water baptism and Spirit baptism

Since the term *baptism* is used in reference to both being filled with the Spirit and being immersed in water, it would be helpful to point out the some of the differences between these two experiences. First, water baptism occurs when a Christian is physically immersed in water by another follower of Christ (often, a pastor). The baptism in the Holy Spirit occurs when Jesus Christ spiritually immerses the Christ follower into the full life of the Spirit (Matthew 3:11).

Second, water baptism is a public witness to the fact that we died with Christ to our old nature and have risen with Christ to a new life (Romans 6:4–8). Spirit baptism is a personal and often private experience that results in greater power for more effective witness and ministry (Acts 1:8). Third, water baptism is primarily an act of obedience. Spirit baptism is primarily a response of faith.

How to Receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Objective 6:

Explain how to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit, like all of God's blessings, is a gift that is received by trusting fully in Christ. This particular gift, however, requires the believer to be physically and spiritually yielded. You may be very eager to experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit at this stage in your Christian walk. If so, prayerfully read what follows and begin seeking the Lord for the Spirit to be poured out on you.

Advice in seeking Spirit Baptism

1. Read the Scriptures which describe the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–8; 2:1–4; 2:38–39; 8:14–17; 10:44–46; 19:1–7).
2. Be convinced in your own heart that God expects believers to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
3. Accept that this gift is God's promise to you (Acts 2:39).
4. Begin to worship and praise Jesus, the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit. As you do this your heart will become more open to receive this blessing. Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink'" (John 7:37). No one but Jesus can fill you with the Spirit.
5. Simply ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit.
6. Stay focused on the Giver (Jesus), not on the gift.
7. At some point in your worship of Jesus, you will sense an unexplainable urge to speak words that are foreign to you. This is the Spirit's enabling you to speak in languages you have never learned (Acts 2:4). Yield to this impulse, even though it will sound strange and seem illogical. You will most likely feel as if you are not in control. In one sense, that is true. The Spirit is taking control as you yield to Him. Remember, God will never force or coerce you to speak in tongues. You must be willing. Essentially, you do the speaking, but the Spirit provides the words.
8. Should you not speak in tongues the first time you ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit, continue to keep your heart open to the Lord as you commune with Him. Do not think you have done anything wrong or that Jesus does not want to give you this blessing. Sometimes, it takes a little longer for us to be ready to receive the outpouring of the Spirit. However, God rewards those who earnestly seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

9. Thank God for giving this gift to you.
10. Remember that the ability to speak in other tongues is the result of being filled with the Spirit, not the purpose for being filled with the Spirit. The primary purpose of the Spirit baptism, as noted earlier, is to bring glory to God by empowering and enabling the believer for more effective witness and ministry.

Do not put God or yourself in a box

There is no one way in which Christians are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we may be sitting while praying (Acts 2:1–4; 4:31), kneeling, standing, or walking. Other times someone may pray with us as we receive this blessing (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6). Still other times individuals are baptized in the Spirit while simply hearing God's Word preached (Acts 10:44–46). The gift can be given when we are alone or when we are praying in a small or large group.

Once the gift is given, however, we must work at developing the language by spending more time praying in the Spirit. Surely, in the beginning one may simply repeat a few words in the unknown tongue—much as a small child begins to talk by using a few words. But as we utilize the language God has given us, our spiritual vocabulary will grow.

Word of caution

Occasionally, and unfortunately, in their zeal to see others baptized in the Holy Spirit, some misguided believers try to help others be filled with the Spirit. I have witnessed these so-called “helpers” saying to the individual who is earnestly seeking Jesus, “Let go!” or “Hold on!” or “Just speak it out!” In most instances when this occurs, the earnest seeker becomes confused and distracted, not really knowing what to do.

I have also heard of certain Christians who will say to the seeker, “Just say ‘Hallelujah’ ten times real fast, and you will begin to speak in tongues.” Or, they have said,

“Repeat these words after me,” then proceeded to tell the praying believer what foreign words to say. While the individuals who do this are very likely sincere, they are, for sure, sincerely wrong. Jesus is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit. He is fully capable of filling us, and the Spirit is fully capable of enabling us to speak the beautiful heavenly language that God wants us to speak.

A testimony

Years ago, while planting New Life Assembly in Athens, Ohio, Barbara, one of our first members, wanted desperately to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. We prayed with her, and it appeared that nothing significant happened. But as she left the church building and drove her car home, she continued worshipping and praising Jesus. Moments later, she sensed a stirring in her inner being and began speaking in a language she had never learned. She was filled with inexpressible joy as Jesus baptized her in the Spirit.

If you have been hungry for more of God and have not yet prayed to be filled with the Spirit, let me encourage you today. Do not be discouraged by those who say that this experience no longer happens in modern time. Millions of Christians around the world know personally that it does!

The Initial Physical Evidence

Objective 7:

Relate the importance of speaking in tongues.

Evidence of the baptism in the Spirit

We believe that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit today because it was the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the first-century church (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). Some theologians believe that the book of Acts is historical, not theological—that its intent is to record history, not to establish doctrine. However,

we believe that God want us to experience the same power that the first-century believers experienced.

It is important to note that speaking in tongues is not *the* evidence of being filled with the Spirit; it is the *initial physical* evidence. There are certainly other evidences. For instance, there will be power for sharing our faith and purity in our actions, attitudes, and words. We experience joy that cannot be suppressed, no matter what the circumstances. And we enjoy a greater awareness of the Spirit in our everyday lives.

Tongues is a great blessing

Let us look at some of the blessings of speaking in tongues. First, when we speak in tongues (sometimes called praying in the Spirit), we can pray with faith and confidence, even though we do not always know how specifically to pray (Romans 8:26–27).

Second, when we pray in the Spirit our own spirit is strengthened and edified (Jude 20, 1 Corinthians 14:4). The following story powerfully illustrates this truth. Cy Homer, who is now with the Lord, was, for many years, a distinguished pastor, preacher, and educator. His wife Ruth, a powerful prayer warrior, related this story. Her husband, Cy, was serving in the Pacific theater during World War II. A chaplain, he had been in the heat of battle. He had told his commanding officer that he wanted to be where the need was the greatest. His company was on a ship being moved from Okinawa to the Philippines. While on the ship, Cy had a nervous breakdown. He was broken emotionally and physically from the strain of war. So he was admitted into a Philippine hospital where he lay curled up for days in a fetal position. Another Spirit-filled chaplain, Chaplain Brengle, visited him. As Chaplain Brengle began to pray in his prayer language, fervently and earnestly, Cy Homer began to pray in tongues, too. He related later that as they were praying in the Spirit, he felt as though all the flotsam (floating wreckage of a ship) and jetsam (excess cargo thrown overboard) were being washed out of his life. As a result of praying in the Spirit, Chaplain

Homer was restored to emotional and physical health. Not long afterward, he was released from the hospital and went back to the battlefield, strong and whole.

When we pray in the Spirit, we commune with God at a deeper level, a level beyond the ability of the mind to understand, influence, or interfere (1 Corinthians 14:14).

Third, since the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, our capability to worship and praise God is also expanded when we pray in the Spirit (Acts 2:11; John 16:14). Pastor Jack Hayford notes, "From the very inception of the church, not only has praise been central, but the spiritual language has been a resource for the exaltation of God, paving the way in praise to the further glorification of Christ Jesus, His Son" (Hayford 1996, 45).

Dealing with doubt

After we have been baptized in the Spirit, often our enemy, the devil, plants seeds of doubts in our minds about our experience. Norma Champion, a university professor and long-time Missouri state senator, was a college student when she doubted the authenticity of her own baptism in the Spirit. She wondered if hers was just an emotional reaction to the presence of God.

As she sat behind a fellow student, Val Keller, in chapel one morning, she heard Val quietly speaking in another language, praying and praising God in French. Having studied French, Norma was able to understand what he was saying. Val seemed to be speaking perfect French, experiencing no problem with the nasal and throat tones that are often difficult for American students of French. In response to Norma's question later, Val replied that he had never studied French and was not even aware that he was speaking that language. From that moment, Norma never doubted her own experience of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues.

Conclusion

The baptism in the Spirit was never meant to be a single emotional and spiritual event to be recorded in a believer's diary. The baptism in the Spirit is an entry point into the environment and atmosphere of the Spirit, so that the Christ follower breathes the air of the Spirit each moment. As we continually breathe in the air of the Spirit, our spirits are revived, enabling us to be more powerful witnesses of Jesus Christ, whom the Spirit has come to glorify and honor.

Consider how the first-century disciples were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). They "were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52), and, in turn, they filled Jerusalem with their teaching. That should be our pattern. We are filled to fill and baptized to be a blessing!

In his insightful book *The Table of Inwardness*, Calvin Miller wrote of an antique wooden dynamite box in his home. The box was made in the nineteenth century, carefully constructed to withstand shock as its explosive contents were transported from the manufacturer to a place of use. On the lid were large red and black letters which said, DANGER DYNAMITE!

"But the last I saw it," Miller wrote, "it was filled with common paraphernalia that could be found in any workroom" (MacDonald 1986, 205).

God intends that we be filled with His "dynamite" power (Acts 1:8). Could it be that our lives are filled with common paraphernalia instead of that which is supernatural and life-changing? Our world desperately needs a church that is Spirit-energized, Spirit-led, and Spirit-equipped. We cannot do effective ministry without His enabling. So let us open our hearts to Jesus and be filled with the "breath of God," the life-giving presence of our Creator and Lord. Through our lives and ministries, may people come to know Jesus Christ. God bless you as you live the Spirit-filled life.

THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPIRIT

It is more than a slogan or a theme; it is a divine promise.

It is not a theory or an option; it is an absolute necessity.

It is not a theological problem; it is the divine solution to the spiritual needs of our generation and the only power that can break satanic bondage.

There is no substitute or option for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

(author unknown)

Reference List

- Hayford, Jack 1996. *The Beauty of Spiritual Language*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- MacDonald, Gordon. 1986. *Restoring Your Spiritual Passion*. Nashville, TN: Oliver-Nelson Books.
- McGee, Gary and Stanley M. Burgess. 1988. *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids: Regency.

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE VERSES TO MEMORIZE

Acts 1:45, 8

Acts 2:4

Acts 2:38–39

Acts 4:31

Ephesians 5:18

SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct answer for each question.

- The Holy Spirit is God.*
 - True*
 - False*
- The Holy Spirit helps believers*
 - only as long as they have sinless lives.*
 - but when it comes to praying, believers are on their own.*
 - by giving them power over the flesh.*
- The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a powerful spiritual experience that*
 - always occurs at the precise moment of salvation.*
 - is a promise to every believer.*
 - is man-made and has no basis in Scripture.*
- The prophet Joel prophesied that the Spirit of God would be poured out on all people.*
 - True*
 - False*
- Evidence of change in the Spirit-filled believers of the first century included their*
 - speaking the Word of God boldly.*
 - reluctance to pray.*
 - fear of political leaders.*
- The essential difference between salvation and Spirit baptism is that*
 - the individual has to work hard to earn salvation.*
 - salvation begins our walk with Christ and Spirit baptism empowers us to live for Him.*
 - Spirit baptism is necessary for our entrance into heaven.*
- Jesus is capable of baptizing us in the Holy Spirit without the help of any other person.*
 - True*
 - False*

8. *Speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit today because it was the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts.*
 - a) *True*
 - b) *False*
9. *Which of the following is not a characteristic of the Holy Spirit?*
 - a) *The Holy Spirit has a mind, intellect, and knowledge.*
 - b) *The Holy Spirit speaks.*
 - c) *The Holy Spirit cannot be grieved or hurt.*
10. *Which of the following is not a benefit of speaking in tongues?*
 - a) *Our spirit is edified and strengthened.*
 - b) *We become superior to those who do not speak in tongues.*
 - c) *The Holy Spirit helps us pray when we do not know how to pray.*

ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. a (9.1)
2. c (9.1)
3. b (9.2)
4. a (9.3)
5. a (9.4)
6. b (9.5)
7. a (9.6)
8. a (9.7)
9. c (9.1)
10. b (9.7)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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