

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The prophetic promise

The baptism in the Holy Spirit was promised many years previously by the prophet Joel.
Joel 2:28-29 ... *I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions.*

John the Baptist confirmed this as recorded in Matthew 3:11 *"I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am - so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*

And so did Jesus in Acts 1:4-5 .., *"Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

The Fulfilment

This was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Feast of Weeks - fifty days after Passover) when the believers were all together (Acts 2:1-3). The Holy Spirit came down to permanently in-dwell the disciples, and the church age began, and will only end when Christ comes back for His own.

Acts 2:1-4 *On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.*

For Everyone

This baptism is for everyone, and usually follows baptism in water, but not necessarily so.
Acts 8:14-17 *When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God's message, they sent Peter and John there. As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

Laying on of hands

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was initially poured out by the Lord on all the believers who were meeting together. Since then, it is normally received through prayer (asking God to fill the person with His Holy Spirit) and by laying hands on them by an elder or anyone who has already received this baptism, but can still be received spontaneously.

Acts 10:44-48 *Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, "Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days.*

Acts 19:6 *Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.*

Requirements

Once we have born again by faith in Jesus, repentance for our sins, and the acceptance of Him as our Lord and Saviour, we have become part of the 'body' of Christ - all our sins are forgiven and we are able and entitled to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There is no time limit as to how soon after our repentance and acceptance that this can take place.

Acts 2:36-39 *"So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!" Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away - all who have been called by the Lord our God."*

We need to believe what the Lord has promised, and sometimes especially we may need to stand in faith, determined not to give up, until we receive the promise.

Luke 11:9-13 *"And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. "You fathers - if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."*

Importance

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is typically evidenced by the ability to speak in tongues, and frequently by the receipt of any one or more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as prophesy or healing, and as evidenced by Peter and John, a new boldness to proclaim the word of God.

Acts 4:8 & 13 *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people.... The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus."*

We should also note the instructions of Jesus at the outset when He appeared to His disciples on the Road to Emmaus just before His ascension, telling them to stay in Jerusalem until they had been clothed with power from on high – as Peter and John a short while later clearly demonstrated. Could this instruction also apply to all of us today – not to commence our ministry until we have received this gift and the accompanying spiritual empowerment?

Luke 24:49 *"And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."*

1 Corinthians 2:4 *And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit.*

1 Thessalonians 1:5 *because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.*

Tongues – the evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit

The immediate evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the ability to speak in tongues – a language unknown to the person speaking. This appears in three scriptures, and with the addition of 'and prophesied' in one of them.

Acts 2:4 *And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.*

Acts 10:44-46 *Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God....*

Acts 19:2-6 *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them. "No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." "Then what baptism did you*

experience?" he asked. And they replied, "The baptism of John." Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus." As soon as they heard this, they were baptized (in water) in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.

Why speak in tongues?

1. A powerful witness

Speaking in tongues means speaking in a language unlearned and unknown to the speaker, but which may be understood by a person who knows that language. This was a powerful witness to the people on the day of Pentecost (which was a reversal of the events at the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:9) and has been used as a witness ever since).

Acts 2:5-12 At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages!... And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!" They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other.

1 Corinthians 14:22 So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. Prophecy, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers.

2. A prayer language to God

Praying in tongues is to God; we do not usually understand what we are saying, but God does! We can (and should) pray in tongues, and we can sing praises in tongues. We can (and should) also use tongues in praying for others or for situations, and in intercession generally.

1 Corinthians 14:2 For if you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious.

1 Corinthians 14:14-15 For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying. Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand.

Ephesians 6:18 Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

3. Spiritual Strength and Intercession

Paul evidently considered praying in tongues to be very important – surely we should too:

1 Corinthians 14:4 A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church.

Romans 8:26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.

1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you.

4. Power and Authority

The ability to speak in tongues was not the only gift promised with the outpouring and baptism of the Holy Spirit. Significantly, the early disciples were told not to leave Jerusalem, and perhaps by implication to start their ministries, until they had received this gift.

Luke 24:49 *“And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.”*

Mark 16:17 *These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed.”*

Acts 1:4 *Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before.*

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere - in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 *My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.*

1 Thessalonians 1:5 *because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.*

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are not given to us for our own benefit, but to validate our preaching of the Gospel – ‘to demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit’ (see 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 above) and as a blessing to all of us in the church. Jesus also referred to the miraculous works He did to validate His message.

John 10:25 *Jesus replied, “I have already told you, and you don't believe me. The proof is the work I do in my Father's name.*

John 10:38 *But if I do His work, believe in the evidence of the miraculous works I have done, even if you don't believe me. Then you will know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.”*

John 14:11 *Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.*

1 Corinthians 12:7 *A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.*

Spiritual gifts (see 1 Corinthians 12:8-11) in addition to the ability to speak in a tongue, are often imparted at the time of receiving this baptism, and typically through the prayer of a fellow believer who has already received this baptism, or on a later occasion through the laying on of hands.

Acts 8:16-18 *The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power.*

1 Timothy 4:14 *Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you.*

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