

3. Baptisms

Why should we be baptised?

Under the New Covenant we only have two ceremonies to follow;

1. Communion: the taking of the bread and wine in remembrance of the fact that Jesus gave his body and blood for our sins, (1 Corinthians 11:23-5); and
2. Baptisms. Matthew 28:19-20 *Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*"

Note: There is more than one type of baptism: Hebrews 6:2 *'You don't need further instruction about baptisms...'* We will look at each of them.

Baptism into the body of believers

When we are born again by faith by the acceptance of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, the Holy Spirit baptises us into the 'body' of Christ. This is not referring to membership of a particular church, but to accepting us into the fellowship of all believers, as a new creation in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12 *The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.*

Galatians 3:27 *And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.*

Ephesians 1:22-23 *God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made Him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is His body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with Himself.*

Romans 12:4-5 *Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.*

Ephesians 4:11-12 *Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.*

Baptism in water

Baptism follows our repentance and acceptance of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. It symbolises what has taken place inside us - our spirits have been renewed, and we have been forgiven and 'washed clean' of all of our previous sins. Now that Jesus is our Lord, we must obey his commands and teachings, the first of which is to be baptised. The 'Great Commission' in Matthew 28:19-20 is to go and make disciples of all nations, and to baptise them. Jesus was himself baptised in water by John (Matthew 3:13-15) and the early apostles baptised all the new converts (Acts 2:37-41 & 44-48.)

What is water baptism?

Baptism is a first act of obedience to the commands and teachings of Jesus (Romans 1:5; John 14:15 and 1 Peter 1:2). Baptism is an outward public sign of acceptance of our new faith and life in Jesus and of obedience to Jesus. Acts 22:16 *What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.* It shows that we are "not ashamed of the Gospel" (Mark 8:38 and Romans 1:16).

What does water baptism symbolise?

1. Death to sinful lives. It also symbolises our death to our old sinful life and rebirth as new creations in Christ - now living to please God His way: Romans 6:3 *Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death?* In baptism we identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the new life that He has brought: 2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* Anyone who has died (spiritually) has been freed from spiritual enslavement to sin.

2. **Burial:** Romans 6:4 *For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.* Colossians 2:12 *For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.*

3. **Resurrection:** Romans 6:4 *...And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.* See Romans 6:1-14.

1 Corinthians 15:43 *Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.*

4. **Public Confession:** Lastly, we publicly identify ourselves with the worldwide and eternal Christian church, across all time and history, as brothers and sisters in the faith. 1 Corinthians 12:13 *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

How is this done?

The word 'baptism' comes from the Greek 'baptizo', which means to cover or immerse in water, and is a commandment for everyone, following their salvation. Baptism therefore does not apply to infants, who are too young to have made a conscious decision, or to the practice of sprinkling. John the Baptist baptised people as an act of repentance, before the death of Jesus, by full immersion, including Jesus. We see that Jesus was fully immersed; Mark 1:10 *And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove.* Also when Philip baptised the Ethiopian: Acts 8:38-9 *And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.*

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Fulfilment of prophesy

The baptism in the Holy Spirit was promised many years previously – 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 in Matthew 3:11 and 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.”*

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 indwell the disciples, and the church age began, and will only end when Christ comes back for His own.

This baptism is for everyone, and usually follows baptism in water, but 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.*

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.*

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?

A powerful witness

1. Speaking in 'tongues', a language unlearned and unknown to the speaker, but which may be understood by a person who speaks such language, 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 not 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 *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. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.*

1 Thessalonians 1:5 *For when we brought you the Good News, it was not only with words but also with power, for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true. And you know of our concern for you from the way we lived when we were with you.*

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.*

Everyone receives one or more spiritual gifts – and we each have our own unique mix of gifts.

They are all given so that we can help others, and not for ourselves, and especially not for our own glory. God can also use us in any of the gifts at any time they are needed.

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

Paul encourages us to earnestly desire the most helpful gifts' for this very purpose (1 Corinthians 12:31).

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, or on a later occasion through the laying on of hands, and typically through the prayer of a fellow believer who has already received this baptism, 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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