

## The Mystery of the Spirit

### The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

#### Lecture 8

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a fairly recent discussion point in Christianity. Wayne Grudem, in his **Systematic Theology** dating from 1994, quite accurately states that his is the first to include an entire chapter on the doctrine. By comparison, Millard Erickson's **Christian Theology**, dating from only ten years earlier, has only one sentence on the subject.

Why is the baptism of the Holy Spirit a topic that has received so little attention in church history? Why is it getting so much attention now?

The beginning of the answer to the first question is that it was not an issue until 1901 when the Pentecostal Movement began, teaching that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was an experience to be sought subsequent to salvation. Spirit baptism was said to be the means to great spiritual power and vitality – evidenced by the phenomenon of speaking in tongues.

Even so, several systematic theologies were written after 1901, yet without a mention of Spirit baptism. Why? The end of the answer is that Pentecostals were not theologians, and theologians tended not to be Pentecostals.

The Pentecostal version of Christianity was experiential, and purposely not rational. The argument for spirit baptism, then, was not chapter and verse, it was “it happened to me, that’s how I know.”

Systematic theology, on the other hand, is a rational exercise. It is taking the data of Scripture and then using reason to categorise it into easily understandable parts. The theologies written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were virtually all from a Calvinistic (and, hence, non-Pentecostal) framework. Because Calvinists did not have an issue with Spirit baptism, little was written about it. Pentecostals were thought to be an aberrant form of Christianity that, like all fads, would pass with time.

But it hasn't passed. Instead, it has multiplied into being the largest Christian movement in the world today. That is the answer to the second question. It is getting attention now because there are so many people around the world who claim to have experienced this Spirit baptism.

Is it true? Is there a second blessing to be sought from God? Should we be praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit to come upon us in power, accompanied by supernatural phenomenon?

The answer will come from a careful interpretation of the Bible. But before we go to the Scripture, let's hear from the Pentecostals what they think Holy Spirit baptism is, and why it should be expected after salvation.

### A Pentecostal View on Spirit Baptism

There are actually two definitions of Spirit baptism within Pentecostalism. The first is in the nineteenth century holiness movement that led to Pentecostalism. Within this movement, and continuing into early Pentecostalism, was a belief that the Holy Spirit would once and for all sanctify a Christian who sought sinless perfection. In other words, the second blessing was an experience

gained only after much seeking in which the Holy Spirit made a person sinless from that point onward. Pentecostalism added tongues to this experience as the outward demonstration that sinlessness had been attained.

The second definition within Pentecostalism rejects the first on biblical grounds. Nowhere does the Bible say that sinless perfection is attainable in this life. Rather, this is a state bestowed in the afterlife. Charismatics hold to this second definition, and they prefer not to call the Spirit baptism by the name “second blessing”.

Nevertheless, later Pentecostals and Charismatics do believe in a second experience of the Spirit – for empowerment. They teach that the potentiality for the experience is latent in the first experience of the Spirit, which is salvation. Theoretically, for some people, the experiences could coincide.

### Arguments for the Pentecostal View

Wayne Grudem, a theologian who identifies himself as Charismatic (though he is also Reformed in theology), summarises the arguments for the traditional Pentecostal and Charismatic view on Spirit baptism with the following points.<sup>1</sup>

1. Jesus’ disciples were born-again believers long before the day of Pentecost, perhaps during Jesus’ life and ministry, but certainly by the time that Jesus, after his resurrection, “breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20.22).
2. Jesus nevertheless commanded his disciples “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1.4), telling them, “Before many days you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1.8). The disciples then obeyed Jesus’ command and waited in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come upon them so that they would receive new empowering for witness and ministry.
3. When the disciples had waited ten days, the day of Pentecost came, tongues of fire rested above their heads, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2.4). Although the disciples were born again long before Pentecost, at Pentecost they received a “baptism with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1.5, 11.16) that was subsequent to salvation.
4. Christians today, like the apostles, should ask Jesus for a “baptism in the Holy Spirit” and thus follow the pattern of the disciples’ lives.
5. Additional instances of this phenomenon – in which people are first born again and then later baptised in the Holy Spirit – is seen in Acts 8, where people of Samaria first became Christians when they “believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8.12), but only later received the Holy Spirit when the apostles Peter and John came from Jerusalem and prayed for them (Acts 8.14-17). Another example is in Acts 19, when Paul found some disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19.1). When he laid his hands on them the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 19.6).

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp 764-766.

## A Biblical Response

There are seven passages in the New Testament that speak directly about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The first four are from the gospels all in reference to the same event: the baptism of Jesus.

Matthew 3:11 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will **baptize you with the Holy Spirit** and fire.

Mark 1:8 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> I indeed baptized you with water, but He will **baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**”

Luke 3:16 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will **baptize you with the Holy Spirit** and fire.

John 1:33 (NKJV)

<sup>33</sup> I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who **baptizes with the Holy Spirit.**’

From these verses, we can conclude that whatever Spirit baptism is, it is something Jesus does, and it is something He does for or on His followers.

The fifth and sixth passage out of the seven refer to the event of Pentecost.

Acts 1:5 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be **baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now.”

Acts 11:16 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be **baptized with the Holy Spirit.**’ [This verse is in reference to Acts 1.5]

From these verses, we learn when the predicted baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred – on the day of Pentecost. The fulfillment is in Acts 2.1-4.

Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The seventh and final mention of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> 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.

The question is, does 1 Corinthians 12.13 refer to the same thing as the previous six mentions. Pentecostals, ceasing on the phrase “baptised into one body”, consider this to be something quite different. They note that in the previous six, Jesus did the baptising and the Holy Spirit was the element into which people were baptised. In 1 Corinthians 12.13, however, it appears that the Holy Spirit does the baptising and the church is the element into which people are baptised.

Is this difference real or imagined?

Before we answer that question, we need to understand why the Pentecostals are so eager to exclude 1 Corinthians 12.13 from the other six references. It is because the verse clearly puts this baptism down as a common experience among all believers – no-one left out. All are baptised; all drink of the Spirit regardless of ethnicity or social status.

If this is Spirit baptism, then it cannot be an experience subsequent to salvation. It must coincide with salvation, otherwise the word all could not legitimately be used. No wonder the Pentecostals want this to be something other than Spirit baptism.

Is this difference real or imagined?

It is imagined . . . and that is easy to spot if we could read Greek New Testaments. In actual fact the very same Greek phrase found in the first six passages is repeated almost verbatim in the seventh. Transliterated it is *en heni pheumati . . . ebaptisthemen* (“in one Spirit . . . we were baptised”). The only difference is that He is called “one Spirit” instead of Holy Spirit.

The fact, as clearly seen in the Greek, is that the Holy Spirit is the element in 1 Corinthians 12.13, just as He was in the other six passages. Jesus does the baptising into the Holy Spirit. So the verse literally should read “For we were all baptised in one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor 12.13 NIV mg).

We might wonder, however, why nearly all translations phrase this in a way that could be misunderstood. The answer is in the double word “in”. For the sake of English grammar rules, translators rearrange the nouns.

Grudem argues that they should have erred against the grammar and kept the theology. The story of the Exodus provides a precedent. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10.2 in reference to the Israelites in the Exodus “all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea”. The cloud and the sea were the elements of the baptism and Moses (or the Mosaic Covenant, more precisely) was the location or state they found themselves in after the baptism. The use of the double “in” is legitimate.

The same is true of 1 Cor 12.13. The Holy Spirit is the element; the church is the location the subjects of baptism find themselves afterward.

Therefore, the biblical record clearly teaches that Spirit baptism coincides with conversion.

### **Answering Pentecostals**

It might be asked, then, what about Acts 1.5 and 11.6 where the baptism of the Spirit clearly came upon people who were previously converted? Doesn't this support the Pentecostal's case?

Actually it doesn't support the Pentecostals. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost signalled a new era. As we have covered in previous sessions, the Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament by coming upon people for specific tasks at specific times. But He did not indwell people – even believers – indefinitely. That special ministry was inaugurated at Pentecost.

So, although it is true the apostles were believers, they were Old Testament believers . . . until Pentecost. Then God started something entirely different.

As the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost (Gentile) parts of the earth, the initial experience of Spirit baptism confirmed that the gospel was indeed the power of God to everyone who believes, the Jew and the Greek.

### *Judea*

Acts 9:17-18 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” <sup>18</sup> And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;

### *Samaritans*

Acts 8:14-17 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup> who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

### *Gentiles*

Acts 10:44-48 (ESV)

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup> “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

After the initial coming of the Holy Spirit upon a new people group, there is no further biblical record of the baptism being subsequent to belief. In fact, as we've seen in 1 Cor 12, the opposite is inferred. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is synonymous with salvation.

Romans 8:9 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

### **Conclusion**

All believers today are baptised by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. This is a point that nearly all Charismatic theologians now concede.

It behoves us, therefore, not to be concerned about the argument, but to be concerned about living in the Spirit who now lives in us. It is a great privilege that includes great responsibility to depend on Him in expectancy of His powerful work in and through us.

To the glory of God.