

Back to Bible Basics

Issue 7

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Brett Rutherford

The Promise of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. John mentions three baptisms in Matthew 3:11: (1) the baptism of fire; (2) the baptism of the Holy Spirit; (3) the baptism in water. However, no one person received all three baptisms that John mentioned. For example, not all who John addressed were baptised in water unto repentance of their sins. There were some among those to whom John spoke who were there to spy on him. This latter group is referred to as the “offspring of vipers”. These “vipers” would receive the baptism of fire. The baptism of fire clearly refers to immersion in the fires of Hell (Revelation 20:1-5). It is just as true to say that not all of John’s audience were going to receive the baptism of fire, as it is to say that not all of those who heard John’s address would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When other scriptures connected to the baptism of the Holy Spirit are considered it is clear that only a handful of God appointed men would receive it.

Who Received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? When John made his promise that some in his audience would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit it is obvious that he was addressing those in that group who would later be appointed to the apostolic office by Christ. These received the fulfilment of that promise on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus. Shortly before the Lord ascended back to heaven, He promised the apostles “...that ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence” (Acts 1:5). Statements in Acts 1:5-8 and Acts 1:26 make it clear that those who received the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1 were the apostles.

The immersion of the apostles by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was a fulfilment of the promise that Jesus made only to the twelve. During the course of Jesus’

ministry He told the apostles that they would receive the Holy Spirit (John 14:1-26; 15:26; John 16:13). Jesus had told the twelve, and only the twelve, that they would be clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

What was the Purpose of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? When the Holy Spirit immersed the apostles they were given “all things” (John 14:26). It is evident that among those “things” that the Holy Spirit gave to the apostles was an accurate recollection of the teachings of Jesus. The Holy Spirit would also confirm that Jesus was the Christ, and that He would be the centre of the message the apostles would receive (John 15:26, 27). The Holy Spirit would also guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13; I Cor. 2:10-13). If all of those who were converted to Christ received the baptism of the Holy Spirit then there would be no need for them to study since all who received the Holy Spirit would be guided into all truth. This is why the early converts observed the apostle’s doctrine (Acts 2:47). They had not all received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the baptism of the Holy Spirit allowed the apostles to perform miracles to confirm the word (Mark 16:17-20). They were also given the power to pass on the ability to perform miracles to others (Romans 1:11; Acts 8:12-18; 19:1-5).

What About Cornelius and His Household? While Peter was preaching to the members of Cornelius’ household the Holy Spirit FELL on all those who heard the word (Acts 10:44). Peter stated that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was issued in the same manner as it was given to the apostles when the church began (Acts 11:15). The difference between the apostle’s Holy Spirit baptism and the immersion of Cornelius in the Holy Spirit was in the purpose; not the application.

Why were Cornelius and His Household Baptized with the Holy Spirit? The purpose of the immersion of Cornelius’ household in the Holy Spirit was to show that the Gentiles were accepted by God (Acts 11:15-18). It demonstrated that the Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to be accepted by God. Peter used the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius as an argument to baptise them into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 10:47, 48; 11:15-18). No where in scripture does Peter state that Cornelius and his Household were given “all things” (truth). This latter benefit was only promised to the apostles when they were immersed in the Holy Spirit.

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Final observations. Only two groups of people ever received a baptism of the Holy Spirit: (1) the twelve apostles on Pentecost; (2) the household of Cornelius. The circumstances that created the need for the baptism of the Holy Spirit on those two occasions do not apply in our present age. There is only one baptism that is applicable to man today (Ephesians 4:5). The baptism is applied by men (not God) (Acts 8:38). It is the baptism in water for the remission of sins. Not all men needed to receive the baptism of Holy Spirit, but all men (including the apostles and Cornelius) need to be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 10:44-48). 📖

BIBLE BAPTISM

Ian McPherson

Water baptism is clearly part of the gospel that is to be preached to the lost (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). Yet most of the religious world believes that baptism is not essential to salvation, saying it is “an outward sign of an inward grace”. Below, however, are some reasons why baptism is an essential part of the gospel plan of salvation.

BAPTISM COMES BEFORE SALVATION. It is generally believed that sinners are saved by accepting Christ into their heart, and are then baptized to show they have been saved. However, every time that baptism and salvation are mentioned together in Scripture, **baptism comes before salvation**. Here are some examples:

Mark 16:15-16. *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...”* In order to be saved, a person must believe the message of the gospel and respond to it by being baptized.

Acts 2:38 *“Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”* Both **repentance and baptism** precede remission of sins. The verse does not say “repent for remission of sins **and then be baptised** as some affirm. It was not until they were baptized that they were saved and added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47).

Acts 22:16 *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* Paul’s sins were not washed away until he was baptised. We must realize that it is the **blood of Christ** that washes away our sins, **not the water**. (Revelation 1:5, Matthew 26:28). Our sins are

therefore washed away by the blood **in the water’s of baptism**.

Romans 6:3-4 *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* Baptism is the only way in Scripture to get into Christ. The new life in Christ does not begin until after we are baptised.

Galatians 3:27-28 *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have **put on Christ...**”* No one can “**put on Christ**” or get “**into Christ**” without being baptised.

1 Peter 3:21 *“The like figure whereunto even baptism **doth also now save us** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,...* Those who believe that baptism make this verse say “Baptism doth also now **NOT** save us”. Satan added the same “**NOT**” in Eden when he said “Ye shall **NOT** surely die” (Genesis 3:4)

BAPTISM IS THE POINT OF CONVERSION. The Book of Acts is the only book in the Bible that records believing, repentant sinners responding to the gospel message. In every case they responded to the gospel by being baptised. Those on Pentecost (Acts 2:38-41), The Samaritans and Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:12-13), The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:35-38), Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48), Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14-15); The Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30-33), The Corinthians (Acts 18:8) The Ephesians (Acts 19:1-5), Paul the apostle (Acts 22:16).

BAPTISM IS THE WAY WE ARE BORN AGAIN. **John 3:5** *“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of **water** and of the **Spirit**, he cannot **enter into the kingdom of God**”* The water in this verse is clearly the water of baptism. **Galatians 3:26-27** says *“For ye are all the **children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ** have put on Christ.”* We are therefore born into God’s family through faith **when** we are baptised.

BAPTISM IS TO GET INTO THE CHURCH. **1 Corinthians 12:13** *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...”* “The body” here is the church of which Christ is the Saviour (Ephesians 5:23).

There is only one valid baptism in God’s word (Ephesians 4:5). When the Apostle Paul met some people who were not baptized correctly he baptized them again (Acts 19:1-5). Surely this is what should happen today! 📖