

What Is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

by Denis Lyle

Denis Lyle explores the significance, purpose, and misconceptions surrounding the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Christian faith.

Scripture: Matthew 3:11

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spirit Baptism"

Description

Denis Lyle delves into the topic of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the importance of using biblical terminology to avoid confusion. He explores the historical and personal aspects of this baptism, highlighting its role in constituting believers into the Body of Christ. Lyle addresses the divergence of opinions surrounding this subject, particularly among Charismatics and Pentecostals, who view it as a distinct work of the Spirit post-salvation. He examines the experiences of the disciples at Pentecost and after, shedding light on the transitional period in the early church and the unique nature of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

Reading: Acts 2:1-13

6. WHAT IS THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

On one occasion Dr. R. Torrey was sharing a conference platform with a Dr. White. As they were talking together Torrey said to Whyte, "what we all need is a new baptism of the Holy Spirit". Dr. Whyte,

whispered, "you mean filling do you not" Later Torrey called at Whyte's private home and acknowledged it was best to speak of things of the Holy Spirit by their proper names. Let me begin this... by stressing the importance of vocabulary. A great deal of confusion, I believe, is caused by failure on the part of many believers to use the terminology of the Bible. Its important to remember that every sport: every profession: every art has its own vocabulary and failure to recognise this will result in chaos and confusion.

For example in the Medical World, the surgeon has a name for every different kind of instrument that he uses and its no use the nurse saying, "I'll call this instrument what I like". If she does the result will be chaos. In the Musical World, the conductor of the orchestra has a name for each of the instruments in the orchestra, and there is no use someone coming along and saying, "It makes no difference to me what he calls the instruments, I have my own name for each of them. He may call it a flute, but I'm going to call it a

clarinet". In

the Family World, parents have names for each of their children and there is no good a stranger coming along and saying, "I don't care what you call your children, I have names of my own for them."

Names and terms are important if we are going to avoid confusion and a disregard of this elementary fact by many Christians has produced complete confusion in the thinking of many in relation to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. But what is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit In

(2:12) a very important question is asked, "What meanest this" If we had been in Jerusalem on this particular day we would have asked the same question.

Jerusalem was packed with people. Passover occurred in late March or early April, so Pentecost was at the beginning of June. It was the best attended of the great feasts because travelling conditions were at their best. There was never a more cosmopolitan gathering in Jerusalem than this one. It was the perfect time for the descent of the Holy Spirit of God.

My, there is nothing haphazard about God. Pentecost was the fulfillment of Divine Prophecy. The Holy Spirit came on this day because that's when God planned for Him to come. He came on this day to fulfill prophecy. The appointed day had arrived and the Holy Spirit came. Now (Acts 2) is all about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now considerable divergence of opinion surrounds this subject.

For Charismatic's and many Pentecostalists this is really the linchpin doctrine. By linchpin, I mean, it holds all the other Charismatic teachings together. They teach that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a distinct work of the Holy Spirit beyond, separate from, and in addition to salvation. They also believe that certain physical manifestations show that a person has experienced this baptism. Initially, the proof was speaking in tongues. Now a variety of other physical manifestations... such as shouting, physical jerks, electric currents in the limbs, and sometimes falling into trances... are considered proof of the baptism. One current Charismatic statement of faith that is typical of most Pentecostal and Charismatic statements says,

" All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian Church. With it comes the endowment of prayer, of power for life and service, the obtainment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry. This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth". The teaching here is that a person can be saved and go to heaven without the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, but if you have it, you can move to a higher level of Christian living and service. So Charismatics have now divided Christianity into two. These could be referred to as the "haves", and the "have nots". The

"haves", are those who have experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and are going to heaven first class, the "have nots", are those who have not experienced this baptism, and are going to heaven alright but its economy class!

As always we need to ask, "What does the Bible

say" Always go to the authority of Scripture, not to our experience or to anyone else's, to determine the truth of the matter. So our subject this... is "WHAT IS THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT "

(1) THE PROMISE MADE OF THIS BAPTISM

There are a number of passages that look forward to this baptism. They speak of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as yet to be and not as yet experienced or bestowed. Now (1) was a promise that was made:

(a) At the COMMENCEMENT of Christ's Ministry:

In the first instance, it was made by John the Baptist in his ministry, and he made it to differentiate between his ministry and the coming ministry of the Lord Jesus. Look at: (Matt 3:11) (Mk 1:18) (Lk 3:16) (Jn 1:33)

Now you see quite clearly from these passages that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was yet to be. The Promise made of this Baptism was made at (a) We also see that it was made:

(b) At the CONCLUSION of Christ's Ministry:

Look at the statement made by Christ which promises the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. (1:5) Notice several things about this promise:

(1) This Baptism was to be experienced by ALL and not SOME.

(2) This Baptism was yet to be, "ye shall be baptised

... "future tense.

(3) This Baptism was limited to a point of time, "not many days hence". Now you will have observed that the testimony concerning the Baptism of the Holy Spirit extends from the appearance of John the Baptist to the Ascension of Christ. In the first four passages it is the Baptist who speaks, and in the last passage our Lord Himself speaks, but their testimonies are one. In all five passages, the announcement is prophetic, so that there was no Baptism of the Holy Spirit previous to our Lords Ascension. That I think is clear enough. (1)

(2) THE PROBLEM RAISED BY THIS BAPTISM

And the problem is this. If the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a subsequent second blessing, then why did the apostles receive the Spirit years after they were saved. You see there are two main views in relation to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

(1) The Baptism of the Spirit is an operation of the Spirit distinct from and additional to His regenerating work which is to be sought and obtained by the believer. This view maintains that the terms, baptised,

filled, received, gift, are all used to describe the one and the same experience. Most charismatics and many pentecostalists accept this view, that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit happens at some point after salvation, and they also believe that the Baptism of the Spirit is something that Christians must seek. The notion that one gets salvation at one point and the Baptism of the Spirit later is often referred to the Doctrine of Subsequence.

(2) The Baptism of the Spirit is an event occurring at the same time with the reception of Christ, which is never repeated and need not be sought. So the first view says that the Baptism is AFTER conversion and the second view says that the Baptism is AT conversion.

But herein lies our problem. If the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a subsequent blessing, then why did the apostles receive the Spirit years after they were saved

Now this is an absolutely crucial problem and one that we have to look at in the light of what the Scriptures teach. Let's examine:

(a) The Experience of the Disciples AT Pentecost:

Charismatics attempt to support their doctrine of subsequence (that is you get salvation at one point, and the Baptism of the Spirit later) from the Book of Acts especially (ch 2) Look at (2:1-4) Now Pentecostals point out that the apostles and the other disciples who experienced the Baptism of the Spirit and tongues in

(2:1-4) had already been saved. Here at Pentecost, they were receiving the power of the Spirit, which they would use to change the world. Now on some of these points the charismatic view cannot be faulted. We can be certain that the disciples mentioned in (ch 2) at least some of them, had experienced salvation.

These were the 120, including the apostles who were gathered in the Upper Room. How do we know that they were already saved Because Christ told His apostles, "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (Lk 10:20) The Lord Jesus had said to them in the Upper Room, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet". (Jn 13:20) There is no doubt that the Saviour was affirming their salvation. But although the disciples knew and trusted Christ, they were still OT believers. They could not have understood or experienced the Spirit's permanent indwelling until the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. You see there is:

(1) A TRANSITION WE NEED TO MARK HERE:

The Acts is a transitional period. My, when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost a new order was established, a new age was being inaugurated, and its inauguration was accompanied by extraordinary signs. During that transition period the dead were being raised to life. Are they still being raised During that period prison doors were opened and the servants of God were set free. Is that still happening During that period the sick on whom fell even the shadow of Peter were healed. Whose shadow has that same power to day During that period they chose leaders by lot Do we do that today During that period they pooled their possessions, do we do that today My, this was a new era. (Acts 2) is one of the greatest transitions recorded in Scripture. It marks the end of the old age and the beginning of the new. Up to now, the Spirit of God was with God's people, but from now on He would indwell them. (Jn 14:17)

As Merrill Unger put it, "Pentecost is as unrepeatable as the creation of the world or of man: as once for all as the incarnation and the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ". Yet Charismatics would make this once for all event normative for all Christians for all time. They claim that what happened in this chapter in Acts should happen to everyone. If that were so, then everyone should also experience a mighty rushing wind and cloven tongues of fire. But of course, those phenomena are rarely if ever mentioned. In 1976 Pentecostals held a world conference in Jerusalem to celebrate " the ongoing miracle of Pentecost". Significantly, delegates had to have interpreters and headphones in order to hear and understand in their own languages. Clearly, although Charismatics point to Acts

(Ch 2) as the basis for what they believe and practice, contemporary charismatic phenomena are not the same as what the disciples experienced in Jerusalem at Pentecost.

On the Day of Pentecost the church was born. Sure, there were believers before Pentecost, but there was no body before Pentecost. But on the Day of Pentecost these believer units were constituted a spiritual body by the Baptism of the Spirit, and thereafter by this Baptism,

everyone upon believing is incorporated into this body.

My, (Acts 2) presents a unique situation. The age of the Holy Spirit could not begin until Christ ascended.

Look at (Jn 7:37-39) You see the apostles did not receive the Baptism of the Spirit until after their

salvation for the simple reason that there was no Baptism of the Spirit until the Day of Pentecost and they were saved before Pentecost. That's why the Baptism of the Spirit came as a subsequent blessing to them. There had to be a beginning somewhere. But since that time the Baptism of the Holy Spirit has been the blessing of all who call on the name of the Lord at the time God saves them. (1)

(2) A DISTINCTION WE NEED TO MAKE HERE:

Its important to distinguish between the experience of those who were already disciples of Christ before Pentecost, and that of those who were saved on that day. The distinction is between the 120, and the 3,000!

Now if I were to ask you which experience is to be the norm for today. How would you respond Well, we live after Pentecost, like the 3,000. With us, therefore as with them, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit are received together. (2:38) Now that is (a)

(b) The Experience of the Disciples AFTER Pentecost:

(Acts 8:14-17) Now this is another proof text that is used by the charismatics. They see this as evidence that one gets salvation at one point and the Baptism of the Spirit later. Certainly, there can be no question that we have here baptised believers. The question is this,

" why was the Holy Spirit withheld when they

believed" Look at (8:16) Another translation puts it like this, " He had not yet fallen upon any of them". Now the Greek word for "not yet", signifies

" something that should have happened but has not yet". In other words this verse is saying the Samaritans were saved, but for some peculiar reason, what should have happened the Holy Spirits coming had not yet occurred.

Why Well, I think we get the clue in (8:14) Note the word " Samaria". Philip's evangelistic efforts were with the despised Samaritans. The hatred between Jews and Samaritans was well known. (Jn 4:9) Now if these Samaritans had received the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation, the terrible rift between the Jews and the Samaritans might have continued in the Christian Church. Pentecost had been a Jewish event, and the church born at Pentecost was made up exclusively of Jewish believers in Christ. Now if the Samaritans had started their own Christian group, the age long rivalry would have continued, with a Jewish church competing against Samaritan assemblies.

Do you see now why God withheld the Holy Spirit He withheld the gift of the Spirit to the Samaritans until the Jewish apostles could be with them, so that everyone could see that God's purpose under the New

Covenant transcended the nation of Israel and included even Samaritans in ONE church. My, let us ever remember the transition that was going on in the early church.

(Acts 2) presents a unique situation. It cannot be used to say that a believer is baptised with the Spirit some time after salvation. The Holy Spirit came to baptise and indwell the disciples in (Acts 2) because that's when God planned for the Spirit to come. There had to be a beginning somewhere. (1) (2)

(3) THE PURPOSE SERVED THROUGH THIS BAPTISM

What purpose does the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

serve Well, when we turn to the NT we discover that this Baptism is:

(a) Something which is CONSTITUTIONAL:

Look at (1 Cor 12:13) That word, "by", can be translated "in or with", but whatever way we take it Paul is stressing that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a Baptism into the Body of Christ. What happened on the Day of Pentecost was this. These believer units were constituted a Spiritual Body by the Baptism of the Spirit, and thereafter by this Baptism everyone upon believing in Christ is incorporated into the Body. Did you notice here that this Baptism is not connected with our STATE as believers but with our STANDING as believers My, the real purpose of the Baptism in the Spirit is not that Christians may be energised for witness and service: nor that we may achieve ecstatic utterance or experience, the real purpose of the Baptism of the Spirit is to bring us into the Body of Christ!

Literally, that word "baptise", means "to immerse." But figuratively it means "to be identified with". When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, He identified these believers with their glorified Head the Lord Jesus and formed the body which is the church. "For by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body." So the Baptism of the Spirit is when God's Spirit takes a person and places him in the Body of Christ! Look at how it happened in

(Acts 2:2-3) These were the signs of the Spirits arrival.

Wind and Fire symbols of the Holy Spirit. (Jn 3:8 Is 4:4) There was:

(1) THE AWESOME SOUND:

It was a sound like a wind. It was not wind but a sound like wind, something resembling a rushing hurricane.

" And suddenly ... " (2:2) The church was born suddenly. It came into being instantaneously. At the Rapture the church will leave just as quickly. (Rev 22:12) God has the sovereign right to determine when the church begins and ends and its beginning and ending have nothing to do with anyones prayers. (1)

(2) THE AWESOME SIGHT:

(2:3) The cloven tongues that sat on their heads weren't actually fire, they appeared to be like fire. This was a testimony that each without exception had received the Holy Spirit. This was the Baptism of the Spirit and they all partook of it. The Holy Spirit identifying these believers with their glorified Head the Lord Jesus, and forming the body which is the church. (a)

(b) Something which is INITIAL:

There is a sense in which the Baptism in the Spirit is Historical and there is a sense in which it is Personal.

But it is always associated with the idea of initiation into Christ and into the Body of Christ. Without doubt there is in (1 Cor 12:13)

(1) Something HISTORICAL:

When Paul says, "For by one Spirit..." (1 Cor 12:13)

He is referring back to Pentecost as the occasion when all believers were baptised into the Body of Christ. III:

F.F. Bruce says, "The Baptism of the Spirit, was strictly speaking something that took place once for all on the day of Pentecost."

(2) Something PERSONAL:

For these words must also be taken to refer to the blessing personally received by all Christians at their conversion. III: As S.S. Short says, "The apostles Baptism in the Spirit occurred on the Day of Pentecost

when the Body of Christ was initially formed. The Spirit Baptism of people since that occasion has occurred at their conversion, but in each case it has been when they were divinely incorporated into Christ's body... their Baptism in the Spirit being the means of that incorporation". My, from God's viewpoint we were baptised in the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, from our viewpoint we were baptised the moment we believed.

Spirit baptism is part of the salvation package. When you are saved you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God comes to live in you. You are sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is your down-payment of more blessings to come. You experience the Baptism of the Spirit into the body of Christ, the church.

Its all part of the package. These sovereign acts of God are never repeated, never withdrawn, and they are guarantees that the believer is eternally secure and has a glorious standing in Christ. Its just like a soldier entering the army. At the moment he becomes a soldier, he gets his gear. He gets a rifle, binoculars, combat boots... the whole package, everything he needs to be an effective and successful soldier. Now the same is true with salvation and the package we receive with it.

My, we are never commanded to seek the baptism of the Spirit. Do you know why? Why ask God to do something He has already done. Suppose you buy John a bike for Christmas. What would you think if John started asking you for a bike on the 1st January right after Christmas.

My, we don't need something more than Christ and salvation. As Christians we have the Holy Spirit. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19) God Himself indwells our bodies (2 Cor 6:16) All the resources we need are there. Paul says, "And ye are complete in Him", (Col 2:10) Peter says, " His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness", How "through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord". There is no point in seeking what is already ours. (a) (b)

(c) Something which is UNIVERSAL:

Look at (1 Cor 12:13) When Paul says, "For by one Spirit were we all... "

He is speaking of some who were quarrelsome and divisive (1:10) carnal and walked as men (3:3) guilty of gross immorality (5:1) turning the Lord's Supper into an orgy of eating and drinking (11:21) yet of these Paul says, "For by one Spirit were we all ... "they were a carnal crowd yet they had experienced the Baptism of the Spirit. My, if this Baptism brings you into higher plane of Christian living, then what happened at

Corinth If you can answer the question, "when was I placed in the Body of Christ" then you can answer the question, "when was I baptised with the Holy Spirit" The moment you believed.

What then about this current view that multitudes of Christians have never experienced the Baptism of the Spirit and that believers should seek it: tarry for it: ask for it until they experience it. Such teaching is unscriptural and the spread of it is bringing many into bondage and confusion. The believer in the NT is never told that he must be baptised with the Spirit, he is told that he has been baptised in the Spirit. We never read in the NT that just some have been baptised and others have not, rather all believers have been baptised by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ and brought into union with Him. We are all one in Christ. My, we don't have to go about seeking to create a unity. Its already there. What we should be concerned with is the outworking of that unity. We have all been baptised by the Spirit into one body. We're united to Christ and to each other. We are members of one body the church. Let us therefore appear as one for the eyes of the world are upon us.

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