

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Power to Know and Love God With All One's Heart

Scriptures are from the New International Version. Some are abbreviated, amplified or paraphrased by this author.

Ephesians 3:16-19: I pray that you may have power ... to know the love of Christ.

Galatians 5:22-23: But the fruit of {walking with and being controlled by} the Spirit is love ...

Ephesians 5:18: Be filled with the Spirit. (The Greek verb tense means "continually.")

Matthew 3:11: The baptism in water is for repentance. Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and fire. (See also at Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33.) As he prepares for his crucifixion, Jesus teaches his disciples that when he returns to the Father, the Holy Spirit will take his place as their Counselor and Teacher, to live within them to personally guide and teach them just as he had been doing. (John 14:16-17; 16:7-15.)

John 20:22: After his disciples had been baptized in water Jesus "breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" This is their "born-again" experience only possible after the resurrection of Jesus. According to Ephesians 1:13-14, they are now sealed (marked with) the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant Christ has made possible through his blood.

Acts 1:4-5: Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem "for the gift my Father promised...you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." Then Acts 2:4 verifies: "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit ..."

Acts 8:15-17: Peter and John pray for believers who had only received the baptism in water, that the Holy Spirit would come upon them: "When [Peter and John] arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."

Acts 9:17: Ananias prays for Saul, now Paul, that he may be filled with the Holy Spirit: "Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord — Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here — has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'"

Acts 10:45-48: Peter and the disciples are amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit has been bestowed on Gentiles who've never been baptized in water. They baptize the believers in water also, to make their conversion and obedience to Jesus complete. "The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.' So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

Acts 11:15-16: Peter is sent to share the gospel with a Gentile believer and while speaking the Holy Spirit comes upon the believer and his household; seeing this, Peter then baptizes them in water also. "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"

Acts 18:24-19:7: A Jew named Apollos is zealously preaching the gospel and making disciples for Jesus in Ephesus. When Paul goes to investigate these disciples, he finds they have received only “the baptism of John ... for repentance.” Paul then prays for them to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, AND they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Scripture is clear that whenever the apostles realized a believer had experienced only one baptism or the other, they saw to it that the believer was instructed about and received the baptism left undone. Note that these are the men who had been personally taught by Jesus.

Some do not believe in the need for this baptism because of Paul’s statement in Ephesians 4:4-6 that “There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all...” But Paul was not asserting that only water baptism is necessary for believers; the subject he addresses here is the unity of believers under one Lord, that no one be baptized IN ANY OTHER NAME than that of Jesus. Ephesians 4 is about WHOSE NAME one is baptized into.

This is an argument Paul further clarified in his letter to the Corinthians church, where he criticizes the tendency of people to follow the person who baptized them, rather than follow Christ:

“My brothers...there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul;’ another, ‘I follow Apollos;’ another, ‘I follow Cephas;’ still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name.” (1 Corinthians 1:11-15).

In the culture of Jesus and Paul’s day, it was common for teachers to baptize their disciples in a way of covenanting with them for accountability and identity; if one left one teacher or school and went to another (who taught a different philosophy, for instance) he would get baptized again to bind himself to that teacher or school.

Paul later concludes in 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” So Paul established in his first letter to the Corinthian church and in his letter to the Ephesian Church that there is only one name in which Christians should be baptized — Jesus Christ — and one Person whose teachings we should follow, one fountain we should drink from: the Holy Spirit of Christ. His actions as seen in the book of Acts clearly reveal that he practiced leading new believers through both baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit.

Romans 6:3-4: The baptism in water is the believer’s public ceremony of being “baptized into his [Christ’s] death.” In true covenant fashion, the new believer symbolically dies and is raised into new life with God (the ‘new covenant in my blood,’ said Jesus in Luke 22:20). Colossians 2:11-13 seems to connect water baptism with one’s spiritual circumcision, the removal of the old flesh sin nature.

Jesus asks the believer to go the next step and receive God’s power to live this new life, which is likened to putting on a new garment. Jesus called this baptism “being clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)

Galatians 3:2: The baptism in the Holy Spirit is received by faith just as salvation is. The disciples demonstrated the difference vividly. Baptized in water, as devoted followers of Jesus, they still lacked the power to love Jesus enough to even watch with him through his suffering in Gethsemane. They love Jesus in the power of their own hearts. After the Holy Spirit outpouring, their lives and witness become incredibly powerful, their love complete! Miracles and gifts beyond their own natural abilities operate freely in them.

See the article, "What the Holy Spirit Does With and For You" to understand how one must be baptized with the Holy Spirit to enjoy ANY of the promises of abundant life made by Jesus. Indeed, the greatest promise of the New Covenant of Christ, that we will all KNOW GOD PERSONALLY, is impossible without the Holy Spirit indwelling and enabling the believer.