

B. 2. Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit

Today we want to look in greater detail at the baptism and fullness of the Holy Spirit. There's a great deal of confusion in Protestant circles concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit because certain Pentecostal and charismatic Christians claim that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace in the life of the believer which brings one into a fuller and deeper experience of the Holy Spirit. They believe that when a person becomes a Christian he is indwelt by the Spirit, but he is not baptized in the Holy Spirit. In order to come into this deeper walk with God, you need to have a second work of grace – a second experience of the Holy Spirit – called the baptism of the Holy Spirit, often accompanied by speaking in tongues, which will initiate you into this deeper walk in the Spirit.

I think this view is completely wrong. It seems to me that the Scripture is relatively clear that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a second work of grace, but it is an initiatory work of the Spirit by means of which we are placed into the body of Christ. It is through the baptism of the Holy Spirit that we are indwelt by the Spirit and made to be members of the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13 seems to make that clear: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” Here the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the universal experience of the church, the initiating act by means of which we are placed into the body of Christ.

Charismatics will usually appeal to the stories in the book of Acts to show that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an initiatory act but is a second work of grace. But, in fact, a close examination of

those stories in the book of Acts reveals that in every single case it is clearly an initial experience of the Holy Spirit that is being described and not a second experience.

For example, in Acts 2 you have the story of Pentecost where the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to the church in Jerusalem and Judea. In Acts 1.4-5 we read

And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Clearly, they had not yet received the promise of the Father, which was the anticipated baptism of the Holy Spirit. They were not to leave Jerusalem until they received this baptism in the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost they received this promise, and Luke says, “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2.4). The only basis, for doubting that this is the initial bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon them, would be John’s story of Jesus’ resurrection appearance in the upper room when Jesus breathes on the disciples and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20.22). But notice that John does not say that they received the Holy Spirit at that time, nor did they leave Jerusalem to embark upon their mission. Rather Jesus’ saying is plausibly understood as a command similar to that given in Luke to receive the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 8 you have the story of how the Holy Spirit is given to the Samaritan believers. Again, a close reading of chapter 8 indicates that they did not have the Holy Spirit until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Luke says the Jerusalem apostles “sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord

Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

The incident is strange because the people did not receive the Holy Spirit until after their water baptism. But the delay may have been due to the fact that the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans needed to be authorized by the church in Jerusalem in order to be seen as valid. What is undeniable is that their experience of the Holy Spirit was an initial experience, not a second one.

Then in Acts 10 and 11 we have the story of Cornelius and his household in which the Holy Spirit now is given to the Gentiles. And once again this is clearly an initial act of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Cornelius and his household. In Acts 11.15 Peter says that “the Holy Spirit fell upon them *just as on us [at Pentecost] in the beginning.*” Again, it is clear that Cornelius and his household had not previously received the gift to the Holy Spirit.

Then in Acts 19.1-6 we have a very strange story of the Ephesian disciples of John the Baptist.

Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³ And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” ⁴ And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Obviously, they had not received the Holy Spirit when they submitted to the baptism of John the Baptist. In fact they say, “We haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So this is obviously not a second work of the Holy Spirit

So, although the baptism of the Holy Spirit in these cases is differently related to water baptism (sometimes preceding it; sometimes independent of it; sometimes actually coming after water baptism), nevertheless it is clear that in every case the persons who experience a baptism of the Holy Spirit are experiencing an initial act of the Holy Spirit and not some sort of secondary act of grace which puts them into a deeper walk with Christ.

So, it is through the baptism of the Holy Spirit that we are placed into the body of Christ, regenerated, born again to new life, and indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Every believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him. Romans 8:9-10:

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness.

According to this passage, it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes the difference whether a person is a Christian or not a Christian. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes a person a member of the body of Christ and a Christian.

Also in 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul says, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” The Holy Spirit is the permanent possession of every believer. He is what makes us regenerate – what makes us Christians. Anyone who does not have the Holy Spirit does not belong to him and is not a Christian.