

# **What does the Bible say about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit?**

## **University Christian Fellowship**

### **Introduction**

At some point in their Christian growth, almost everyone comes up with questions about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. What is it? What does the Bible have to say? What is it for? Who is it for? This document aims to answer those questions with some passages from the Bible.

All verses quoted are from the New International Version of the Bible, but the same truths are in all translations.

### **Prophesies concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit.**

All four Gospel accounts in the Bible have references to a coming baptism with the Holy Ghost distinct from the baptism in water. Both have their own purposes.

*"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*

-Matthew 3:11

This one seems pretty straightforward. John the Baptist differentiates between water and Holy Spirit baptism and foretells Jesus baptizing people in the Holy Spirit.

*"I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

-Mark 1:8

Again John differentiates between water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism and foretells that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

*John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*

-Luke 3:16

John here, again, prophesies that someone powerful will come along and baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit. He talks about Jesus.

*"I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' "*

-John 1:33

John foretells that someone will baptize with the Holy Spirit. The conditions are met in Jesus.

The four scripture quotations above show that all four accounts of the Gospel found in the Bible are in agreement that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is real and that it is found through Jesus. It is a distinct experience from water baptism.

## What is it?

**Baptism, in water or the Holy Spirit, is an important part of Christian growth.**

Baptism is a pretty well-accepted tradition in the church and is a powerful step in Christian growth. Paul writes about it in his letter to the Hebrews:

*Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*

-Hebrews 6:1-2

Baptisms here are included in the 'elementary' teachings of the church; simple stuff which most believers would cover soon after becoming a Christian. Notice that it mentions *baptisms* and not just a single baptism. This is further proof that water and spirit baptisms are distinct.

**The Holy Spirit baptism is a separate and distinct experience from salvation and from water baptism and is distinct from simply having the Holy Spirit.**

The scriptures found in the Gospels are clear on the distinction between water and Holy Spirit baptisms, but these other verses also distinguish between the two baptisms:

*For John baptized with water; but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*

-Acts 1:5

Here the prophesy of a baptism with the Holy Spirit was restated and is again distinguished from a baptism in water.

*When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they 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 8:14-17

This set of verses says a lot. First, it distinguishes between water and Holy Spirit baptisms. If they were the same, and they'd already been baptized in Jesus's name, why would they need to be baptized again? Second, it says something about *how* the baptism is carried out by telling us that Peter and John placed their hands on them. Third, it dispels the notion that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was only for the people in the upper room, administered directly by Jesus, since here they are baptized with the Holy Spirit through John and Peter, after the day of Pentecost when the people in the upper room were baptized.

*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 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. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

-Acts 10:44-48

Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ seems to be a term for water baptism. These are also some rich verses because they not only distinguish between water and Holy Spirit baptisms, but also tell about the evidence of baptism with the Holy Spirit (speaking in tongues) and show that it is not just for the Jewish believers but for the Gentiles as well.

*Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

-John 20:21-22

This took place a good 40-50 days before the first baptism in the Holy Spirit took place. So, the disciples received the Holy Spirit, but they weren't *baptized* in it, and as you see there is also no physical evidence in these verses which would indicate that a Holy Spirit baptism took place.

## **Who is it for?**

**Holy Spirit baptism can be experienced by any believer.**

*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.*

-1 Corinthians 12:13

Jews, Greeks, slaves, and freemen pretty much covered all of the bases in describing the early Christians. They can all be baptized by the Holy Spirit, associating them into one body with the same Spirit to drink.

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"*

-Matthew 28:19

Jesus hints at who the baptism is for. If baptism was only available for some, he wouldn't have said *all* nations.

**It is not a limited-time offer.**

*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift*

*of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*  
-Acts 2:38-39

Many people argue that Holy Spirit baptism was only for the early church. If that was true, then these verses would mean that nobody since the early church has been called of God!

**It is a command, not an option.**

*“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*  
-Luke 24:49

When Jesus gives his disciples instructions on what to do in the future, he stresses the importance of receiving the ‘power from on high’, which is clearly a reference to the baptism with the Holy Spirit as that marked the end of their waiting in Jerusalem. He didn’t say “Hey, if you’re not doing anything later, you might want to stick around and consider being baptized.”

**How do you recognize it?**

**There is usually some visible evidence when God does something in someone’s life.**

*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.” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,*  
-Acts 9:17-18

When God healed Saul, changing things within him, and filling him with the Holy Spirit, there was a visible sign. This is evidence that there is often an external manifestation accompanying work that God does on someone internally.

**The physical evidence is speaking in tongues.**

The scriptures seem to agree pretty closely that when someone is baptized with the Holy Spirit that they will also speak in tongues. That serves as unique evidence that the baptism has taken place:

*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*  
-Acts 2:1-4

The physical evidence here is a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, divided tongues as of fire resting on each one (both occurred before they were filled) and speaking in tongues after they received.

*“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 11:15-16

When the spirit came on the believers ‘in the beginning’ it caused them to begin speaking in tongues. So for it to happen to these other believers shows the beginning of a consistent pattern.

*While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.*  
-Acts 19:1-7

Here the two baptisms are distinguished, and evidence is shown by the people speaking in tongues and prophesying when they receive.

## **What’s it for?**

**The reason for the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to give power and make us witnesses.**

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*  
-Acts 1:8

When the Holy Spirit comes on the believers they become witnesses sent by God. It gives them power beyond their own meager abilities.

## **Conclusion**

From the Bible verses we’ve shared, you can hopefully see that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is for everyone, even today, and that it is a separate experience from the baptism in water, and that both have their place in the church. If you would like to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, talk to us or your pastor and we’ll place our hands on you and pray that you would be baptized in the Holy Spirit.