



The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

by Mike Harding

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1. What Is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit?

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand... “Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins... (And John said,) “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* Matthew 3:1-2, 5-6, 11

“I indeed baptize you with water, *but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*” Mark 1:8

“...*He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*” Luke 3:16

“...*this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.*” John 1:33

John the Baptist came preaching that people should repent from their sins and prepare themselves to receive the soon coming Messiah. As a sign of this repentance and preparation, John was baptizing people with water in the River Jordan. “Baptize” is a Greek word which means to “immerse” or “submerge”. When someone is baptized in water, they are completely immersed in the water. It’s not just a little sprinkle or a splash. *It’s a symbol of complete submission.*

But John said that the Messiah, Jesus, would baptize us with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God’s Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God; He is the third Person of the Trinity. *John said that Jesus would completely immerse us in the Holy Spirit! Hallelujah! The baptism in the Holy Spirit is when Jesus immerses us in the Holy Spirit. The result is that we are filled with the power and presence of God’s Spirit. We are to be completely submitted to God’s Spirit.*

It is significant that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is mentioned in all four gospels. It is also significant that it is mentioned right away, at the beginning of each gospel. This tells us that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a major doctrine of the New Testament. John said that Jesus would baptize YOU with the Holy Spirit. God intends that every Christian receive this experience, not just ministers or ancient apostles. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a valid and important experience throughout the entire church age, not just for the early church. Some would say that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is not for everybody, or that it passed away with the first apostles. But the Bible reveals that Jesus wants to fill YOU, TODAY, with God’s Holy Spirit. Are you ready? Are you hungry for more of God in your life?

And (Jesus) said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. *Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.* Luke 24:46-49

Jesus told His disciples that their assignment was to preach the gospel of salvation to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. *But first, they were to wait until they were filled with God’s power, which Jesus had promised would come upon them. This is the baptism in the Holy Spirit!* Jesus has an assignment for you, too. The work of building God’s kingdom goes on, and you have a part to play. But you must receive the power of God, the infilling of the Holy Spirit, in order to do your job. We can’t do God’s work with human power or strength. “*Not by (human) might nor by (human) power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.*” (Zechariah 4:6) If we try to do God’s work with our own strength, we will

only produce more carnality. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* (John 3:6) If you want to produce good spiritual fruit, you must be filled with the Holy Spirit. *“Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”* (Matthew 7:20)

Jesus told His disciples to tarry, or wait, in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them. Because of that, some have mistakenly taught that we must now tarry, or wait, until God decides to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. (That’s not true! If that were still true, we would also have to wait in Jerusalem!) *But we will see in the scriptures that God already gave the Holy Spirit to the church 2,000 years ago on the day of Pentecost.* There’s no more waiting! All you have to do is receive, by faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and you will be filled with the spiritual power that you need to serve God.

2. The Old Testament: Foreshadowing of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Every important doctrine revealed in the New Testament is always found concealed in the Old Testament in prophetic or symbolic form. There are abundant prophetic and symbolic references in the Old Testament to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves.” So Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” And she said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.” Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors-empty vessels; do not gather just a few. And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones.” So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured it out. Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” And he said to her, “There is not another vessel.” So the oil ceased. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you and your sons live on the rest.” 2 Kings 4:1-7

This story from the Old Testament shows that God can meet any need supernaturally if we look to Him in faith. But it is also a symbolic picture of the church age, under the new covenant. The oil represents the Holy Spirit, infinite and supernatural. The vessels are people that God wants to fill with His Spirit. God wants vessels that are ready to receive His presence, empty of any other desire. As long as there are more vessels willing to be filled, God will continue filling them. None will be turned away. When all who are hungry for God have been filled, the church age will end.

“And you shall take the anointing oil, *pour* it on his head, and anoint him.” Exodus 29:7

“And you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and *sprinkle* it on Aaron and on his garments...” Exodus 29:21

These two verses in Exodus indicate the two different experiences we may have with the Holy Spirit. The oil again represents the Holy Spirit. When we are saved - washed in the blood of Jesus - the Holy Spirit regenerates us. This is symbolized by the sprinkling of blood and oil in Exodus 29:21. But the baptism in the Holy Spirit is represented in Exodus 29:7 by pouring oil over the priest’s head. It is

the same Holy Spirit, but in different measures, different experiences.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. Psalm 133:1-2

These verses from Psalm 133 show again a symbolic picture of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The oil is poured over the head of the high priest, and it runs down over his garments. This symbolizes the anointing of the Holy Spirit that came first upon Jesus, the Head of the body of Christ. The anointing then flows down over the rest of the body, which represents us, the church. Notice that to be anointed, it is necessary to be in one's proper place under the head (in submission to Jesus), as well as to be in unity with the rest of the body. Being argumentative, divisive or rebellious is a sure way to grieve the Holy Spirit and miss the anointing that comes down from Christ, the Head of the body.

“The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.” Isaiah 41:17-18

In the New Testament we find that water is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In this prophecy, God promises to open up fountains, rivers and pools in the dry land. In other words, God will pour out His Spirit in spiritually dry places. Those who are thirsty for God and for life will be satisfied with an abundant flow of the Holy Spirit. Where will the fountains and rivers flow from? From Christians who are baptized in the Holy Spirit, ministering to the lost. Where will the pools of water be found? Wherever Christians meet together to worship God in spirit and in truth.

3. The New Testament: The Spirit In You and the Spirit Upon You

As we see in the Old Testament examples of the *sprinkling* of the oil and the *pouring* of the oil over the head of the high priest, there are two different measures or experiences that we may have of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit comes to live *in* us when we accept Christ, but then comes *upon* us when He anoints us to serve. He lives *in* us when we are born again, but comes *upon* us when we are baptized in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit *in* us makes us *sons*, but the Holy Spirit *upon* us makes us *servants* with power. The Holy Spirit *in* us ministers to *our personal needs*, but the Holy Spirit *upon* us helps us minister to *the needs of others*. Let's look at the scriptures that show this.

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and *will be IN you*.” John 14:15-17

In John 17:17, Jesus said the day will come when the Holy Spirit will live *in* us. He was referring to the day we are born again. This was fulfilled when Christ appeared to His disciples on the day of His resurrection:

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." *And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit..."* John 20:19-22

In that moment, the disciples were spiritually reborn and the Holy Spirit came to live inside them. The church was born on this day. (Compare Genesis 2:7, when God birthed the human race by breathing life into Adam, with John 20:22, when Jesus - God in the flesh - birthed the church by breathing spiritual life into His disciples. Also compare the Great Commission in Genesis 1:28, "*Be fruitful and multiply,*" with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, "*Make disciples of all the nations.*" - birth vs. rebirth.) Then, in Acts 1:1-3, we read that Jesus continued appearing to His disciples for a period of forty days after He had breathed the Holy Spirit into them. At the end of those forty days, He told them that they were soon to have *another* experience with the Holy Spirit:

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit not many days from now... You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come *UPON* you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:4-5, 8

The disciples had already had the Holy Spirit living inside them for forty days but, in Acts 1:8, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come *upon* them, and that they would receive power to be witnesses for Christ. Notice the difference in the two experiences: the Spirit *in* them and the Spirit *upon* them. This promise was fulfilled ten days later, on the day of Pentecost. Pentecost was the Jewish Feast of Harvest, held fifty days after the Passover. In this case, it was a day of spiritual harvest, as the power of the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and they preached, leading thousands of souls to faith in Christ.

When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat *UPON* each of them. *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit* and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:1-4

Let's look at some other scriptures that speak of these two experiences:

"...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a *fountain* of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:14

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow *rivers* of living water." *But this He spoke concerning the Spirit*, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John 7:37-39

In the passage in John chapter 4, Jesus symbolically referred to a fountain of water that is springing up inside of every believer. I believe that this refers to the Holy Spirit who lives inside the believer after salvation. This *fountain*, a small spring of water, is enough to satisfy our spiritual thirst. It is *for us* personally. It is the new birth. However, the *river* that Jesus referred to in John chapter 7 is a large amount of water which is meant to flow out *from us*, bringing the water of life and healing to the people all around us. The scripture plainly says that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit; I believe that this refers to the New Testament baptism in the Holy Spirit.

“The *wind* blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So *is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*” John 3:8

When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a *rushing mighty wind*, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* Acts 2:1-4

In John 3 and Acts 2 we see another symbol of the Spirit - the wind - used to show us two different experiences with the Holy Spirit. In John 3, the person who is *born of the Spirit, or born again*, is personally led and guided by the Holy Spirit in an invisible way. Like the wind, the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, but can be felt when He is moving. Like the air, His presence brings life and His absence brings death. The child of God depends on the Holy Spirit for personal guidance. In Acts 2, however, the Holy Spirit comes as a *mighty rushing wind*. This is something much more powerful. The disciples are *filled, or baptized*, with the Holy Spirit, fulfilling Jesus' promise of power to be His witnesses.

The *fountain* of water is for us personally; it is our salvation. The *rivers* of water are to bring life to the lost around us. It's all water, but in different measures and different experiences.

The *wind* of the Spirit is for us personally; it guides us as the sons of God. The *mighty rushing wind* is the power to change the world, to win the lost to Christ. It's all wind, but in different measures and different experiences. So it is with the Holy Spirit: It's the same Spirit of God who lives in us at the new birth and baptizes us with His power to be witnesses. It's the same Spirit, but in different measures and different experiences.

What other differences do we find in these two experiences of the Holy Spirit?

Now the works of the flesh are... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... Galatians 5:19-23

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

In Galatians 5:19-23 we find the works of the flesh compared with the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit *in us* changes our nature from carnal to spiritual, from selfishness to godliness. Notice that there are *nine fruits* of the Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 we find the gifts of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit *upon us* grants supernatural manifestations of knowledge, power or speech. The purpose of these gifts is to minister to the needs of the church or to demonstrate the reality of Christ to the lost. Notice that there are *nine gifts* of the Spirit.

The Spirit *in us* changes our nature from fallen men to sons of God. The Spirit *upon us* changes us into servants of God, manifesting the power of God as the Spirit wills.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things...” John 14:26

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...” John 16:13

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God... The Spirit Himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God... Romans 8:14-16

In John 14:26, John 16:13, and Romans 8:14-16, we see that the Holy Spirit is *in us* to teach us spiritual things, to help us with personal decisions, and to guide us into all truth. This is something He does for us personally, as the *sons of God*.

“The Spirit of the LORD is *upon Me*, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel...” Luke 4:18

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come *upon you*; and you shall be witnesses to Me...” Acts 1:8

In Luke 4:18 and Acts 1:8, we see that the Spirit comes *upon us* to make us bold witnesses for Christ. This is how the Spirit equips us as the *servants of God*.

4. The Purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” *Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age...* Luke 3:21-23

Jesus Himself was baptized in the Holy Spirit before He began His ministry! This is significant. If Jesus were living and ministering as God in this world, He could have used His own power to heal the sick, cast out demons and raise the dead. He was God. He is God. But Jesus lived and ministered during His time in this world as a normal man, just like you and me. If Jesus would have ever used His own power as God, even just once, He would not have qualified to be our substitute on the cross! *He had to take our place on the cross as a real human being, although a sinless human being.* (This was the nature of Satan’s temptation in Luke 4:1-13. There is nothing sinful about changing a stone into bread, but it would have meant using His own power as God rather than depending on the will of the Father and the

power of the Holy Spirit. Do you see this?)

Jesus lived on this earth as a normal man, as if He had no divine knowledge or divine power of His own. (See Philippians 2:5-11.) He was submissive to the will of God the Father, as we should be. He was led and guided by the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, as we should be. He only began His public ministry *after* He was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Every healing, every miracle, and every work of deliverance from demons, Jesus accomplished by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is our model for ministry. He said that we would do the same works that He did, and even greater works! (John 14:12) If Jesus needed the baptism in the Holy Spirit to carry out His ministry, certainly we do too!

Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "*THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.*" Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:14-21

Jesus plainly announced that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was for a specific purpose. He said the Spirit of the LORD was *upon Him BECAUSE* God was anointing Him to preach the gospel, heal the sick and set people free from bondage to Satan. That is the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. God wants YOU to be filled with the Holy Spirit, too. God wants to use YOU to preach the gospel, to heal the sick, and to set people free. YOU are part of the body of Christ. YOU are Jesus' hands, Jesus' feet, and Jesus' mouth in this world.

5. The Apostles' Priority of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city... But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized... *Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.* For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. *Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.* Acts 8:5-8, 12, 14-17

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. *And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"* So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to

the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. *And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.* Now the men were about twelve in all. Acts 19:1-7

In the Book of Acts, the history of the early church, we see that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was a high priority among the apostles. As soon as the apostles heard that the people of Samaria had accepted Christ, they immediately sent Peter and John to them so that they could receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They didn't say, “Well, we'll wait to see if they're really serious about God.” They didn't say, “Well, we'll wait until they're more mature, or until we know they're living holy.” No, the apostles said, “They need the Holy Spirit NOW. LET'S GO!”

In the same way, when the apostle Paul ran into some disciples as he was travelling and preaching, *the first thing he asked them was if they had received the Holy Spirit!* This tells us how important it is that Christians receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit! The apostles considered it a high priority. The disciples Paul ran into weren't even very clear about Jesus and salvation. Paul shared Jesus with them, baptized them in water as Christians, *and then immediately laid hands on them that they might receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit!*

6. How to Receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; *and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.*” Acts 2:38-39

The one and only requirement for receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to be a Christian in fellowship with God. (In Acts 10:24-48, the apostle Peter preached the gospel to the gentile Cornelius and his household. They believed, and the Holy Spirit instantly fell upon them and filled them all. They began speaking in tongues and magnifying God. *Later, Peter baptized them in water.*)

You do not have to be a mature Christian first. You do not have to be baptized in water first. You do not have to meet any standard of holiness first. In the book of Acts, the apostles prayed for new believers immediately. The Holy Spirit filled new believers immediately.

Acts 2:38 says that the Holy Spirit is the *gift* of God. A gift does not have to be earned. A gift is simply *received*, with gratitude. Verse 39 says that “*the promise (of the Spirit) is to YOU and to YOUR CHILDREN, and to ALL who are afar oft, and to AS MANY AS THE LORD OUR GOD WILL CALL.*” The baptism in the Holy Spirit is for EVERY Christian throughout the ENTIRE church age. That includes you.

“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you... For everyone who asks receives... If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil (not yet perfected in love and holiness), know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” Luke 11:9-13

Jesus promised that if you ask to receive the Holy Spirit, your Heavenly Father says “YES!”

“Ask, and it will be given to you.”

Some people have worried, because of bad teaching, that they might open themselves up to evil spirits by seeking this experience. But Jesus said your heavenly Father will NOT give you a serpent or a scorpion (symbolic of evil spirits, according to Luke 10: 19). God will *surely* fill you with His Holy Spirit if you ask in faith.

“Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.” Mark 11:24

When you ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit, believe that you receive when you pray. You may feel a powerful presence of God filling you. You may feel something like electricity going through you. *Or you may feel nothing at all! What’s important is that you believe God’s promise. If you ask, you receive! Believe it and begin thanking God for it!*

I have seen people repeatedly beg and plead to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Perhaps they did not FEEL what they thought they should feel so they continued asking and begging. They were looking for a feeling. But that’s not what faith looks like or acts like! God promised that if we would ask, He would fill us. Believe that you receive when you pray! Giving thanks is evidence that you believe!

When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* Acts 2:1-4

After you pray, the Holy Spirit will come upon you. In Acts 2:1-4, they were ALL filled with the Holy Spirit and ALL began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (There were 120 people present, including Jesus’ mother and brothers. *Nobody was left out!*) Speaking in tongues is the initial gifting when you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

How does this happen? Sometimes it begins to flow out of your mouth like an unstoppable river of praise in a new language. *But it usually requires a step of faith from you.* Acts 2:4 says that the Holy Spirit gave them the utterance, but THEY began to speak! That means that the Holy Spirit will put the words in your mouth, but only as YOU begin to speak! After praying to receive the Holy Spirit, take a step of faith and begin to speak - but not in a language you know. The Holy Spirit will give you the words!

(A note to pastors and church leaders: When I pray for people to receive the baptism in the Spirit, I confidently tell them that they WILL speak in tongues NOW. I pray for them and lay hands on them, and then I tell them to begin speaking in faith. Usually, they begin speaking in tongues right away. But sometimes there will be a few who don’t receive right away. They need more faith. Romans 10:17 tells us that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” So teach them more, instructing them from the word of God concerning the purpose of the baptism and how it is received. Sometimes these people will also need to receive ministry outside of the public service so that they will feel more comfortable.)

Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them *that they might receive* the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. *Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy*

Spirit. Acts 8:14-17

And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Acts 19:6

Notice that on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell in a sovereign way on the disciples. But later on, the apostles laid hands on new believers and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Why the change?

The Holy Spirit was *given* to the church on the day of Pentecost. The disciples had to wait, or tarry, in Jerusalem until the proper day and hour. But after the Spirit was given to the church, there was no more waiting!

Notice that in Acts 8:15, the apostles prayed for the new believers that they might *receive* the Holy Spirit. This verse doesn't say that the apostles asked God to *give* them the Holy Spirit. Many times we miss it here. God has already given the Holy Spirit to the church on the day of Pentecost. Now, it is not a question of whether God will *give* someone the Holy Spirit but of whether we will *receive* what has already been given to us.

After Pentecost, a Christian who was filled with the Holy Spirit (like the apostles) could simply lay hands on other Christians and, receiving by faith, they would be filled too. It's just like pouring water (or oil) from a full vessel into an empty vessel. Just as in 2 Kings 4:1-7, the miracle is that afterwards both vessels end up full!

You can receive the Holy Spirit by praying a prayer of faith, or by having another Spirit-filled Christian lay hands on you. Then, by faith, you begin speaking in new tongues!

(To pastors and church leaders: It is vitally important that you pray for all of your church members to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Make it a regular invitation, just as you would for salvation. For those who want to receive, lead them in a prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit, then lay hands upon them. Stay with them and encourage them until they are freely praying in tongues.)

Do you want to be baptized in the Holy Spirit right now? If so, just pray this prayer in faith: "Lord Jesus, Matthew 3:11 says that You will baptize me with the Holy Spirit. Luke 11:13 says that if I ask for Your Spirit, my heavenly Father will fill me with the Holy Spirit. Right now, Jesus, baptize me in the Holy Spirit. Right now, Father God, fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit right now, just like in Acts 2:1-4, and by faith I receive the gift of speaking in tongues. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Now, begin to use your new prayer language to praise and glorify God!

7. The Gift of Tongues

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; *they will speak with new tongues*; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Mark 16:15-18

Jesus said that one of the ways to recognize His disciples was that they would speak in new

tongues. This supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit is a mark of the followers of Jesus. It was not meant to be accepted by some Christians and rejected by others. It was not meant to divide the body of Christ into two camps.

Do you have to speak in tongues to be a Christian? Of course not. Faith in Jesus alone makes you a Christian. But this prayer language is a gift of the Holy Spirit that will make your Christian life stronger, and God wants you to receive it.

Some have taught that the gift of tongues is not for today; that it disappeared when the original apostles died. But there is no scripture to support that. The Bible does say that the gift of tongues will come to an end "*when that which is perfect has come,*" (1 Corinthians 13:8-12) but it's clear from the context of that scripture that it's referring to the future kingdom of God, when we are living in resurrected glory. Until then, God gives us the gift of tongues to help us receive guidance, revelation and strength. Let's look at some verses that show this:

These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. But you, beloved, *building yourselves up* on your most holy faith, *praying in the Holy Spirit*, keep yourselves in the love of God... Jude 19-21

One of the many uses of the gift of tongues is to strengthen our inner spirit. The Bible says "*building yourselves up...praying in the Holy Spirit.*" Building up is the opposite of tearing down. When you feel that the world is trying to tear you down - and it usually does - you can build yourself up again by praying in tongues. It's like recharging a battery after it has gotten weak. You hook the battery up to a power source and make it strong again. You do the same with your spirit. You hook up to the presence of God by praying in tongues. The anointing and power of the Holy Spirit rises up fresh inside of you and soon your spiritual strength is renewed.

The fresh anointing that comes while praying in tongues also brings revelation and guidance. When facing difficult decisions or a problem you don't know how to deal with, pray in the language the Holy Spirit gives you. It will soon usher you into the presence of God where you will find revelation, wisdom and guidance for the need you face.

How does this work? When you are praying in your native language, your *mind* is thinking of what to say or what to ask, and your tongue obeys. In other words, your tongue is hooked up to your *mind* when you are praying in your native language. *You are drawing from your own mind.* Your mind probably does not have the solution or the wisdom you need. If it did, you wouldn't be praying!

But when you pray in tongues, the Bible says that it is your *spirit* praying. (1 Corinthians 14:14) Your tongue is now hooked up to your spirit. *You are drawing from your spirit.* And because you are a Christian, your spirit is directly hooked up to God in a way that your mind is not. Your mind is still in the process of being renewed (Romans 12:2), but your spirit is alive to God and in communication with God's Spirit. (Romans 8:14-16) When you are praying in tongues, you are accessing the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. *Guidance and wisdom will often come to you while you are praying in tongues.*

Revelation, or better understanding of the Scriptures, will also come to you while praying in tongues. Why? Because the same Holy Spirit who is the author of the Bible (2 Peter 1:21) is able to give you understanding of its meaning. *Revelation - supernatural understanding of the Bible - will often come to you while you are praying in tongues.*

When I need spiritual strength, when I am faced with a problem or decision, or when I am studying scripture, I pray in tongues.

For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God, for no one understands him;

however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. 1 Corinthians 14:2

Speaking or praying in tongues is not to communicate with man, but so that your spirit can communicate with God directly. It is usually to be done in private prayer time, although groups of Christians sometimes pray in tongues together. Others will not understand what you are saying. In fact, your own mind will not usually understand what you are saying. But your spirit is having rich fellowship with God. Your spirit is being strengthened and uplifted.

He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. 1 Corinthians 14:4

Some people have said that praying in tongues is “selfish” because it edifies you but does nothing for anyone else. That’s not true. If you yourself are not strengthened - if you are spiritually weak - you can’t be of much help to others, can you? You must strengthen yourself and edify yourself in the Spirit so that you can continue being of service to others. Praying in tongues helps to keep you strong. It also helps you to become more familiar with the presence and the voice of the Holy Spirit, so that He can use you to prophesy - to speak inspired words of edification to the church. In other words, praying in tongues often, in private, is one of the keys to being used greatly by God in the other gifts of the Spirit. The apostle Paul himself said, “*I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all.*” (1 Corinthians 14:18) Paul was greatly used by God, wasn’t he? There is a connection!

Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. 1 Corinthians 14:13-15

There are two major uses of the gift of tongues: one is private and one is public. We pray in tongues in private for our own edification and fellowship with God. This is under our own control, once we have received the gift of tongues. We can pray in tongues any time we want to, by our own will.

The other use of tongues is in public worship meetings. This is referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:10-11. “...to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” Notice that this use of tongues is as the Holy Spirit wills, not as we will. In this use of tongues, the Holy Spirit may prompt a certain Christian to speak forth a message in tongues, out loud, in a gathering of Christians. The Spirit will then prompt another Christian to speak forth the interpretation of the message in tongues. The interpretation will usually be a message directly from God to the people present at that gathering. The interpretation will be given in the language the people present understand.

Tongues plus interpretation is basically the same thing as the gift of prophecy. Prophecy is a message, spoken publicly, right from the heart of God. Prophecy, according to 1 Corinthians 14:3, is a message of “*edification and exhortation and comfort to men.*” It is never condemning or manipulative, because God does not condemn us. We are His children. He loves us and wants to encourage us. Messages given by tongues and interpretation will likewise always edify, exhort and comfort us, because it is God’s nature to speak to us in that way. He may warn us or correct us, of course, but even that will be done in love.

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:2 to “*desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*” Why? Because prophecy, or tongues and interpretation, encourages the whole church - because God desires to speak directly to His children, and prophecy is one way He can do that. *Pray*

often for spiritual gifts to be manifested in your church or in your ministry. Pray in tongues often to become more sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 12:29-30, the Bible asks us: “*Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?*” The answer to these questions is obviously “no.” But this passage is referring to the *public* use of tongues and interpretation, which is distributed *as the Holy Spirit wills*. Not everybody will be used to give public messages in tongues, or interpretations, any more than everybody can be an apostle or a prophet. We should all pray and desire to be used in this way, but not everyone will.

But this does not mean that we cannot all pray in tongues in private use. We all can! This gift is for EVERY CHRISTIAN!!! Some have used that verse to say that not every Christian can receive the gift of tongues. Yes, every Christian can receive the gift of tongues, but not every Christian will be used to give public messages in tongues, or to interpret them.

But what about interpreting your private use of tongues?

I said earlier that praying in tongues is one way to get revelation, guidance and wisdom from God. Oftentimes the answer we need will just seem to rise up from our spirit while we are praying in tongues. We will suddenly just *know* the answer or *see* the solution. But sometimes God wants to speak to us more directly. Sometimes, He speaks to us privately through the gift of tongues and interpretation.

The first time this happened to me I was worried about money. I was praying about how to get the financial needs met for my ministry. I was speaking in tongues and felt that God was trying to speak to me. Then I began to interpret the words into English. God told me, *through my own mouth*, that He had already seen in advance and provided for my needs. I asked how this could be so. I spoke in tongues some more, and God answered by the interpretation that I should remember two verses of scripture: Ephesians 1:3 and 2 Peter 1:3. These verses plainly state that God has already provided in advance for all of our needs. As a result of this experience, my worry decreased and my faith increased. That’s God!

1 Corinthians 14:13 says, “*Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.*” I have found that if we ask God for interpretation of our tongues, we will receive it. I can’t and don’t interpret *all* of my speaking in tongues. But when I need guidance from God, He sometimes uses this way to speak to me and give me wisdom. I have read the testimonies of many great men of God and have found that many of them use this same means of hearing from God. It is available to all of us. But like all the other gifts of God, we must ask for it in faith.

Do you want to receive strength, guidance, wisdom and revelation from God? Pray in tongues frequently, asking God for guidance, wisdom and revelation. (Ephesians 1:15-23 and Colossians 1:9-12) Pray for the gift of interpretation. Continue seeking these gifts in faith until they are a part of your daily life, and you will be a more victorious Christian, bearing rich fruit for God’s forever kingdom.



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