

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The promise that Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit (and fire, which is referenced only in Luke 3:16) does not contain much detail. The resurrected Jesus reminded the disciples of the promise and further informed them that the first instance of it would be “not many days from now.”¹ Based on the fact that He also told them not to leave Jerusalem until it happened,² this extra detail most likely was given near the time when He ascended,³ which was 40 days after He was resurrected.⁴

Several years later, Peter provided a clear statement of two occasions when this baptism in the Spirit occurred, when he recounted the conversion of the household of Cornelius, citing the promise and applying it to the events of Acts 2⁵ and Acts 10.⁶ The events of Acts 19:1 – 7 in which Paul laid his hands on twelve men resulting in the Spirit coming upon them does not mention the promise, so may or may not be the same thing. The same may be said of Philip and the conversion of some Samaritans, upon whom the Spirit did not come until the apostles laid hands on them.⁷

Certainly, this event can no longer occur in exactly the same way as the two known occasions because prophecy has passed away with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD,⁸ as did miraculously learned languages,⁹ demon possession,¹⁰ and miraculously appointed leaders (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers).¹¹ However, claiming that God stopped providing miraculous help to the faithful would invalidate prayer, because any time God changes the course of events away from what would happen naturally in response to a request, a miracle happens. Further, gifts from God vary widely, far more than the very narrow list of prophets, tongues, demons, and leaders. Some of those promised gifts are wisdom,¹² enduring temptation,¹³ enlightenment,¹⁴ a gracious nature,¹⁵ serving, sharing, exhorting, and being merciful.¹⁶ For a complete description, see volume 1 of this work, *Think as a Spirit*, chapter 6, The Work of the Spirit.

Worthy of note is the confusion of prepositions inserted by modern translators. The actual phrase is “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” not “with” or “by.” The faithful all have the Spirit dwelling in them.¹⁷ So, “immersed in the Holy Spirit” most likely refers to this new connection between the spirit of a faithful person and the divine Spirit. The visual representation of tongues

¹ Acts 1:5

² Acts 1:4

³ Acts 1:9

⁴ Acts 1:3

⁵ Acts 11:15, 2:4

⁶ Acts 11:16, 10:44

⁷ Acts 8:14 – 17

⁸ Daniel 9:24 – 27 as confirmed by Luke 21:20; Zechariah 12 – 13 as confirmed by John 19:37; also 1 Corinthians 13:8 – 10

⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:8

¹⁰ Zechariah 13:2

¹¹ Ephesians 4:11 – 16

¹² James 1:5

¹³ James 1:12

¹⁴ Hebrews 6:4 – 5

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 9:15

¹⁶ Romans 12:6 – 8

¹⁷ Romans 8:9, for example.

and prophecy were necessary at the occasions of Acts 2 and Acts 10 so the observers would know that God had done something at that moment. Paul described a similarly visual sign of the miraculous transformation of the faithful caused by the indwelling Spirit, but without tongues and prophecy, in 2 Corinthians 3:16 – 4:11.

Clearly, the apostles baptized with water.¹⁸ The immersion in water is a symbol of several things, one of which is buying into the promises of the work of the indwelling Spirit. So, in that sense, every Christian is baptized in the Spirit. The resulting miraculous manifestation of the event varies from person to person. Gifts are different and entirely under God's control. Certainly, prophecy, tongues, casting out demons, and miraculous appointment to leadership are off the table because the New Testament says so. Anything else that God promised is fair game if you can prove that God did it. Christianity is the only religion based on evidence, so we need to stick to what we can verify.

¹⁸ Acts 8:14 – 16, 8:36 – 38, 10:44 – 48, 11:16