

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1-4

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For some years now the unofficial coalition of denominations comprising the Evangelical Movement (the majority of Protestant denominations), has preached the unquestioned reality of a modern day Holy Spirit Baptism.

Traditionally, those in churches of Christ have seen a different story when the Bible was holistically appraised. Let's have a look and see what the Scriptures reveal. We might just find a surprise or two along the way.

I Corinthians 12:12-13

- This is the primary text used to support two aspects of much contemporary Holy Spirit Baptism teaching.
 - First, Spirit baptism is the saving baptism, not water baptism.
 - Second, Holy Spirit Baptism enables a Christian to do what otherwise could not be done—live the Christian life successfully.
- The passage, however, must be seen in its complete Bible context.

The Full Biblical Context of Holy Spirit Baptism

- John's prediction (Matt. 3:11-12).
- An Apostolic fulfillment (Acts 1:8; 1:26-2:1-4, 14-21; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:43).
- A special case (Acts 11:14-15).
- More to the story—where we come in.
 - Acts 2:38-39 and the "Gift of the Holy Spirit."
 - The "Promise/Inheritance" (Galatians 3:14-29).
 - Acts 3:19; Isaiah 44:1-4 and the outpouring of the Spirit to renew ("refresh") the land.
 - Apostolic flow (Acts 8:18; II Tim. 2:6; Rom. 1:11; Eph. 2:20; I Cor. 12:28).
- The miraculous part (I Cor. 13:8-10; Eph. 4:11-16).
 - This ministry provided the fully revealed Jesus of the New Covenant.
 - It is the internalizing of Jesus that renews the Christian spiritually (Jn. 14:18, 23; Eph. 3:16-17; Col. 1:24-29).
 - The Spirit revealed New Covenant allows the Christian to know the Gospel, obey it, and live with Christ in a transforming relationship.
- The continuing part—the Promise/Inheritance (Gal. 3:14, 18; Acts 20:32; 22:18; Rom. 8:16-17; Eph. 1:14; 5:5; Col. 1:12; 3:24; Heb. 9:15; I Pet. 1:4).

Water Baptism vs. Spirit Baptism—Which Saves?

- Extreme Dispensationalism and different Gospels, one for Jew (water baptism), one for Gentiles (Spirit baptism).
 - Acts 8:35-36; I Peter 3:21.
 - Acts 10:47-48; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5.

- Holy Spirit Baptism was administered only by Jesus, and only twice.
 - Matt. 3:11-12.
 - Acts 2:33
 - I Cor. 12:12-13
- It isn't an either/or thing.
 - Holy Spirit Baptism only happened twice (Acts 2:1-4; 11:14-15).
 - Spirit baptism (I Cor. 12:12-13) is simply the baptism revealed by the one and only teaching of the Spirit (Gal 1:6-10; Eph. 4:1-6); it is water baptism, the one that follows Jew or Gentile being taught about Jesus (Matt. 28:18-19; Acts 8:35-36; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-28; I Pet. 3:21).

Confusion fills contemporary discussions about the Holy Spirit and baptism. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit, administered by Jesus on only two occasions, has been merged incorrectly with the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian baptism. Further complicating the discussion is the equally inappropriate separation of water baptism from the place of the Holy Spirit in that baptism.

The “outward sign of an inward grace” teaching has addressed only part of a united, not divided, story. While Christian baptism is indeed the outward sign of an inward grace, the outward sign and inward grace both happen at the same time—salvation and water baptism at the same time (I Pet. 3:21). Further, our help in the Christian life is not mystical, it is as practical as a faithful relationship with Jesus and the transforming power our walk with Him allows and the security such a walk guarantees (II Cor. 3:18; I Jn. 1:7; Rom. 8:31-39).