

CHAPTER 16

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*what about sickness and death?
...and how about healing and life!*

Before reading this chapter, how would you answer the question: Are we open to God moving through us supernaturally? If not, why?

A remote village receives the Holy Spirit

In a minute, I am going to pray for you, that you may receive the Holy Spirit. When He comes, you will speak in a language you do not know.’ The preacher spoke this, standing before the inhabitants of a remote village in Assam, India. The whole village had turned out to hear him and were now waiting expectantly. When he prayed, there was a short pause, and then suddenly many of them spoke out loudly in new languages. There was no stammering or hesitation—they just burst out in tongues, confidently and boldly. You could almost see the Holy Spirit sweep over them.¹

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit first occurred on the day of Pentecost following Jesus’ ascension to heaven (Acts 2:32–33). It could not have happened before then.

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. (NKJV)

However, the Holy Spirit worked with a small number of people long before the apostles ever received the Baptism. Moses, for instance, had the Holy Spirit, and he transferred some of his anointing onto seventy elders so they could judge Israel (Numbers 11:16–17). Saul had the Holy Spirit for a time (1 Samuel 16:14) and David did too, although he feared the Spirit might be taken off him when he sinned with Bathsheba (Psalm 51:11). The Holy Spirit fell on Samson (Judges 14:6), Daniel (Daniel 4:18–19) and others as well. He empowered people, usually leaders, who God wanted to use in a special way.

The prophet Joel predicted a time when He would become widely available to all believers.

Joel 2:28–29 ‘And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on

my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days...' (NIV)

Jesus receives the Holy Spirit

When John baptised Jesus in water, the Holy Spirit came down from heaven, like a dove, and rested on Him (Luke 3:21–23). From then onwards, He ministered supernaturally. The scriptures indicate the Holy Spirit performed the supernatural miracles rather than Jesus Himself (Matthew 12:28; Luke 4:14, 18; 5:17; see also John 5:19). Jesus transferred some of this power onto His disciples in a similar way to Moses empowering the seventy elders (Luke 9:1; 10:1) so that they could perform many miracles while fulfilling the task He had given them.

The disciples receive the Holy Spirit

Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus promised His disciples they would receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16–17 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. (NKJV)

His disciples already experienced the Holy Spirit's power and Jesus acknowledges they already knew Him. The Baptism differs from their existing experience in two ways. Firstly, He will live with them forever, which implies their existing experience is temporary. Secondly, Jesus indicates the Baptism will be a more intimate experience.

After His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus appeared to them and told them to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Acts 1:4–5 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait

for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.’ (NIV)

Shortly afterwards they received the promised gift.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (NKJV)

When the Holy Spirit rested upon them, they spoke in foreign languages and talked about the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11). They did not learn the languages using their intellects because they immediately spoke them fluently. They spoke in tongues as they yielded to the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity

At this point we will consider the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (often called the Trinity). The Old Testament rarely distinguishes between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, instead placing the emphasis on God being one God.

Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” (NKJV)

However, sometimes it makes the distinction. The following Old Testament passage shows the three aspects of God—the Redeemer, the Lord God and His Spirit—a clear indication of Christ, The Father and the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 48:16–17 “Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit Have sent Me.” Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go...” (NKJV)

(For further examples see Psalm 2; Psalm 110:1 with Matthew 22:41–46; Isaiah 61:1 with Luke 4:18–19; Isaiah 44:6; 63:10; Malachi 3:1–2.)

The New Testament reveals God in a much greater way than the Old Testament; firstly, with the appearance of Jesus Christ and the revelation He is the Son of God, and secondly, with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus spoke about Himself, He rarely referred to Himself as the ‘Son of God’, instead preferring the cryptic phrase ‘Son of Man’ (see for example John 8:28). The Jews tried to stone Him when spoke of God as being His Father, because it implied He was equal to God (John 10:30–33). He described His relationship with the Father in various ways.

John 10:30 ‘...I and the Father are one.’ (NIV)

John 10:38 ‘...the Father is in me, and I in the Father.’ (NIV)

John 16:28 ‘...I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.’ (NIV)

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (NKJV)

(See also John 1:1–4, 14; 14:10.)

The Father also speaks about His relationship with Jesus.

Matthew 3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (NKJV)

The Holy Spirit is God

We can see the Holy Spirit is God from the following passage:

Acts 5:3–4 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own?

And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” (NKJV)

The Holy Spirit has personality like the Father and the Son and is not just an abstract power.

John 16:13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (NKJV)

(See also Acts 13:2; 1Corinthians 12:11.)

In summary, we say that God is one God, but He reveals Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, when we receive the Holy Spirit, we also receive the Father and the Son (see John 14:16–20).

Who can receive the Holy Spirit?

Any believer can receive the Holy Spirit. He is not for a privileged few or just for the first disciples.

Acts 2:38–39 Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptised, 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.’ (NIV)

When do we receive the Holy Spirit?

We do not receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit automatically when we get saved. Although scriptures indicate we have the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:17) we still see believers receiving the Holy Spirit some time after their salvation.

Acts 19:2 ...“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” ... (NKJV)

Paul spoke this to some disciples who did not know the Holy Spirit existed and only after they heard did they receive Him. Also, the people of Samaria believed the gospel but had not received the Holy Spirit. When the apostles heard this, they sent Peter and John to them so they might receive Him (Acts 8:14–17). It seems an important reason why believers miss out on the experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is because they have not heard about it. Believers can be ignorant of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1).

How we receive the Holy Spirit

We receive the Holy Spirit in the same way we are saved—by believing what we hear (Galatians 3:2).

Galatians 3:14...we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (NKJV)

We need to ask God (Luke 11:13), believe He will answer us (Mark 11:22–24), then speak out in tongues trusting the Holy Spirit will speak through us (Jude 20). This ‘step of faith’ is a very significant moment in our walk with God. By taking it, we demonstrate we trust God even though we might not understand what will happen to us. For many people, it will be their first experience of something supernatural.

Speaking in tongues

Some people prefer not speak out in tongues until they feel a prompting first. Because of this, they are more likely to receive the Holy Spirit in a meeting where people will pray for them as they will sense an encouragement to speak out. However, if we know God wants us to receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues, we will not need any prompting. We can receive the Holy Spirit any time we want.

When Jesus went around praying for the sick, many people came up to Him and asked Him to lay hands on them so they could be healed (see for example Mark 5:23). One time, a centurion asked

Jesus to speak the word only rather than go out of His way to lay hands on his servant. He believed that Jesus did not have to touch his servant for him to get well (Luke 7:1–10). Jesus remarked that this man had a greater faith than those He had seen in Israel. It is a similar thing with receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. We just need to believe God wants us to have it.

Some fear that if they speak out in faith, the devil may speak through them instead, rather than the Holy Spirit. God, however, promises not to give us something evil when we ask for the Holy Spirit.

Luke 11:9–13 “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 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, 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!” (NKJV)

How do we know when we have received the Holy Spirit?

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

We see by reading the New Testament that they knew when someone received the Holy Spirit because they spoke in tongues (Acts 10:44–46). However, not everyone would acknowledge this (Acts 2:13).

Some people maintain that once we have prayed to receive the Holy Spirit, we have it, and we do not have to speak out in tongues to prove we have received it. Although no scripture expressly says we have to speak in tongues to receive the Holy Spirit, and so therefore we need to keep open to this possibility, the way we know for sure

we have received is that we can speak in tongues. We cannot speak fluently in another language without learning it first; therefore, it has to be God speaking through us. Speaking in tongues confirms we have received the Holy Spirit.

The scriptures indicate that the Holy Spirit is linked somehow with the tongue. When the apostles first received the Holy Spirit, tongues of fire descended upon them (Acts 2:3). Fire is not normally in the shape of a tongue, so this would suggest God used this as a sign to show us that the tongue accompanies the coming of the Holy Spirit. The apostles confirmed this point themselves with a second supernatural sign by speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4).

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a supernatural experience so therefore we should expect to see supernatural things happen to us when we receive it. The most obvious sign is speaking in tongues.

What difference does the Holy Spirit make in our lives?

It is not essential to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in order to have a close walk with God. For the most part of His life, Jesus managed without it. However, He needed to receive the Holy Spirit first before God could use Him to minister to others.

The Holy Spirit makes a big difference to our lives though. We will become more sensitive to spiritual things and more open to supernatural things. After receiving the Baptism, we should notice a refreshing in our spirits. Only after we have received the Holy Spirit will we realise just how dry and thirsty we were.

John 7:37–39... “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. (NKJV)

We will sense, more than ever, the fact that we are saved.

1 John 3:24 The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. (NIV)

After a time, we will notice the Holy Spirit's help. He will strengthen us spiritually and help us to handle difficult situations without losing our composure. Situations which previously annoyed us will no longer do so. Because the Bible is a spiritual book (John 6:63) we will find it easier to read. The Holy Spirit will help us to worship God (John 4:23–24) and to pray effectively (Romans 8:26–27).

Jude 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit (NKJV)

The Holy Spirit gives us gifts and we will exercise supernatural power as we share about Jesus to others (John 16:8).

Acts 1:8 "...But 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." (NKJV)

As a Christian without the Baptism, we can pray to God or resist the devil with the confidence of receiving an answer, so long as we know we are in accordance with the authority given to us in the Bible. If Satan resists our prayer, we can hold fast, basing our assurance on the Word of God.

A spirit-filled believer has the potential to pray with greater power. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in them, it is possible for the Holy Spirit to pray through them. When this happens God Himself speaks through us and it is likely we will receive instant answers to our prayers.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit has the potential to make a huge difference to our lives. With some people though, we note that sometimes little change results. This can happen if we do not allow the Holy Spirit to work through us (1 Thessalonians 5:19), or block Him in some way. Allowing sin a place in our lives will grieve Him (Ephesians 4:30) and hinder His ability to work in us.

Questions to consider

1. Will we always know when the Holy Spirit moves through us or through others? If not, why?
 2. Can the church manage without the Holy Spirit?
 3. How important is it to speak in tongues?
-

References:

1 The preacher was John Saunders, who, in September 2007, led a small team from Eynsford Baptist Church, Kent, England, on a mission trip to India. The author was privileged to witness this event.