

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and You

I have been baptized twice. I kinda feel like the first one didn't take. I think I may have been baptized with a baptism more in line with John's baptism rather than in the name of Jesus. Within a couple of weeks after I came to faith in Jesus, I read about water baptism in the Bible and I couldn't wait to get baptized. I didn't have a home church or a pastor at the time, so I asked the teacher who had been assigned by CPCC to be the advisor of our Christian fellowship on campus to baptize me. He was an ordained Baptist minister who wasn't a pastor, but he was ordained, that's all I needed to know. I asked him to baptize me and he agreed to do it someday soon, but I didn't want to wait that long. After our fellowship was finished that same day and he was on his way back to teach his class, I literally chased him down practically begging him to baptize me, that day. Talk about not dealing well with immediate gratification. I wanted to be baptized and I wanted it now. And he did. He owned a farm somewhere in Rowan County and he baptized me in his farm pond that afternoon surrounded by his cows.

Then later I began visiting a Pentecostal congregation here in Charlotte and I became convinced that I needed to be baptized by this pastor. And I was. I didn't join the Pentecostals but after that baptism in water, I realized the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life in a powerful way. We are not born again in the waters of baptism, but something happened to me that day that made a wonderful change in my life and attitude.

Questions for your average Baptist.

These questions may sound like "Capt. Obvious" kinds of questions but they address an issue we Baptist need to hear and rethink, "what does baptism mean? And just exactly why are we baptized?"

This is the Webster's Dictionary definition, **Definition of baptism**

1a: a Christian sacrament marked by ritual use of water and admitting the recipient to the Christian community

b: a non-Christian rite using water for ritual purification

cChristian Science : purification by or submergence in Spirit
2: an act, experience, or ordeal by which one is purified, sanctified, initiated, or named

Webster's Dictionary isn't exactly a go-to source of theology or Christian doctrine. It is excellent for what it is intended, but it's not where I go when I want to understand matters of faith.

This is my definition of baptism: "the immersion in water of a convert to the Christian faith in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus."

For most of us, including we Southern Baptists, water baptism has devolved into a take-it-or-leave-it kind of practice. We have made it seem like it's an option rather than an act of obedience. No one will ever find that idea in Scripture.

¹⁸ *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

¹⁹ *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

²⁰ *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matt. 28:18-20 NAU)

Jesus was commanding His apostles to baptize new disciples without exception. I don't understand how so many people who profess faith in Christ believe that water baptism is an option and not a commandment. You simply will not find that taught anywhere in the Bible. Listen to this as an example:

Acts chapter 10 and v.44,

⁴⁴ *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.*

⁴⁵ *All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.*

⁴⁶ *For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,*

⁴⁷ "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?"

⁴⁸ And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

(Acts 10:44-48 NAU)

And he what? "He ordered them to be baptized." But there are those who say, "you can't tell me what to do. You can't command me to be baptized." Oh, but I can.

That's an historical account of what happened when Peter preached the gospel to a house full of Gentiles. That event teaches us at least two lessons about baptism, that the man of God is to command new converts to be baptized in water, and that the order of baptisms, baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit, happen as God wills and not as we think they should occur. There is no order of service for when one receives either baptism.

You and I were baptized in the Holy Spirit the moment we believed that Jesus is the Son of God who died in our place. And then we were baptized. In the word of God some people were baptized in the Holy Spirit and then commanded to be baptized in water. Go figure.

Acts 19 and v.4,

⁴ Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. (Acts 19:4-6 NAU)

Again, the order that God does these things is entirely up to Him. We who baptize believers are to respond accordingly.

The baptism of the Spirit and the manifestations of that baptism

Now, about this business of speaking in tongues and prophesying. What's up with that? "I don't speak in tongues and as far as I know, I have never prophesied. So how can I be sure that I have been baptized in the Holy Spirit?" I'm glad you asked that question. Here's how you can know.

First, "Do you love your brothers and sisters in Christ?"

The Pentecostals speak of the baptism in the Holy Spirit like this, "we believe in the baptism of the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues." Speaking in tongues is not an evidence of the baptism in the Spirit but a gift of the Spirit. The Charismatics and Pentecostals take the historical account of the early church in the book of Acts and make it out to be the prescribed method for the church. It is not. THE evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is our love for one another. ³⁵ *"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn. 13:35 NAU)*

I see no reason in the word of God to deny the present reality of the gifts of the Spirit. But I also see in the context of the entirety of the New Testament that not all believers have the gift of speaking in tongues or prophesying. ²⁸ *And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.*

²⁹ *All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?*

³⁰ *All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? (1 Cor. 12:28-30 NAU)*
And the plain-as-the-nose-on-your-face answer is, "No, they do not."

The evidence that you have been baptized by the Holy Spirit is your love for one another.

Second, "Do you confess that you sin and that you have sin?"

Did you catch that? We are to confess that not only do we sin but that we also have sin. That's the reality of the Christian life. We sin.

⁸ *If we say that **we have no sin**, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

⁹ *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

¹⁰ *If we say that **we have not sinned**, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. (1 Jn. 1:8-10 NAU)*

We have sin and we do sin. And does God keep an account of our sins that He's going to one day confront us with? Absolutely not. ⁵ *But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,*

⁶ *just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:*

⁷ *"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.*

⁸ *"BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT." (Rom. 4:5-8 NAU)*

And that, beloved, explains how Paul could say this, **Romans 8:1** *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:1 NAU)*

Third, "Do we keep His commandments?"

³ *By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.*

⁴ *The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;*

That sounds a little scary to me. I thought we were under grace and not the law. Ahhhh, the question should be, "just what are His commandments?" This, ²³ *This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. (1 Jn. 3:23 NAU)*

²⁴ *The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. (1 Jn. 3:24 NAU)*

6

We keep His commandments by the grace of God. We believe by His grace and we love by His grace. Remember that we love because He first loved us. And our keeping His commandments is evidence of the work of the Spirit within us. ²⁴ *The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*

¹⁵ *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"*

¹⁶ *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, (Rom. 8:15-16 NAU)*

And Fourth and finally, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?”

¹⁵ *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (1 Jn. 4:15 NAU)*

¹³ *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, **so that you may know** that you have eternal life. (1 Jn. 5:13 NAU)*

And just exactly why do we believe these things? Because our Father in heaven has revealed them to us and brought us to faith in His Son through the ministry and baptism of the Holy Spirit. We don't try to believe, we believe by the grace of God through the life-giving, light-giving, faith-giving ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I have never regretted being baptized that second time, in fact, I'm so glad I did. I can't explain what happened after that, but I can say that the Spirit of God made some radical changes in Johnny Helms because I was obedient in baptism.