

Spirit Baptisms

Different Baptisms

There are, therefore, several different baptisms in scripture. Doctrinal error comes when people confuse these baptisms with one another. We have looked at water baptism and the baptism with the Holy Ghost. One common problem comes when the baptism with the Holy Ghost is often called Spirit baptism. Unfortunately, two other Bible doctrines are also called Spirit baptism by different Bible teachers. Therefore, in common language, people sometimes call three different things Spirit baptism—and one of these is not even called a baptism. No wonder people are confused. Let us try to make sense of the confusion by comparing three baptisms and then dealing with one more doctrine that is often called a baptism.

First, there is water baptism. That is the water baptism we still have today. You take someone down in the water, you dip them in the water and they come up out of the water. Here is a table that illustrates water baptism and its elements.

ELEMENTS WATER BAPTISM

Administrator	Preacher or one baptizing
Subject	Believer
Medium	Water

The second baptism is called the baptism of or with the Holy Ghost. That is what God called it. Some people call this Spirit baptism and this is part of the confusion. They call it Spirit baptism because they believe it to be a repeatable event in the life of believers who can have their own Pentecost—whatever that may be. To some, this is an empowering of the Spirit. To others, it is when the believer speaks in tongues. Many look upon it as a second blessing. The proponents of this second blessing use some typology and scriptural analogies to support their doctrine but there is no direct teaching in the Bible that tells us to look for or expect this kind of experience.

Therefore, be careful whenever you hear something called Spirit baptism. It means different things to different people. Some people will call the baptism with the Holy Ghost a Spirit baptism. So now we will add the Baptism with the Holy Ghost to our table.

ELEMENTS	WATER BAPTISM	BAPTISM WITH HOLY GHOST
Administrator	Preacher or one baptizing	Jesus Christ
Subject	Believer	Believers at Pentecost
Medium	Water	Holy Ghost

Many will say they want another Pentecost. They think we have to replicate Acts chapter two in order to have the power of the Spirit. So, in their eyes, we need to speak in tongues and have the rushing of the mighty wind. They look at the word fire (*Acts 2:3; Matthew 3:11*) and think we need the baptism with fire. No, that is not what anyone wants. You do not want to be baptized with fire. Think about what baptism is. If baptism with water means that you are immersed in water, and if baptism with the Holy Ghost means they were placed in the Holy Spirit, then what is baptism with fire? It is not good! There is a baptism with fire, but it is hell. *Matthew 3:10-12* mentions fire three times. Each time it refers to the fire of judgment.

True Spirit Baptism

Now let us consider what is most properly called Spirit baptism. The Bible does not talk as much about this one. However, it is a Bible doctrine. At the point of salvation the Holy Spirit places us into Jesus Christ. When a soul trusts in Christ and is saved, he or she is "in Christ." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..." (*Romans 8:1*). This doctrine is clearly taught in scripture. However, some disagree with calling it a baptism. Most everyone will agree that we are in Him. We also agree that we were placed in Christ at the point of salvation. But what placed you in Him? I propose to you that the Holy Spirit placed you in Him. Consider the chart again.

ELEMENTS	WATER BAPTISM	BAPTISM WITH HOLY GHOST	SPIRIT BAPTISM
Administrator	Preacher	Jesus Christ	Holy Spirit
Subject	Believer	Believer	Believer
Medium	Water	Holy Spirit	Jesus Christ

You may notice that the Administrator and the Medium in the baptism with the Holy Ghost is exactly opposite in Spirit Baptism. In the baptism with the Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ placed the believing Jews into the Spirit. But in Spirit Baptism, the Spirit places us into Christ. One was a historical event; the other is the experience of every true believer in Christ. It occurs at the time of salvation.

How do we enjoy the blessings of the Spirit that came on the day of Pentecost? *Galatians 3:14* says: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". In other words, we are brought into the blessings of Pentecost by faith. We do not need the Pentecostal experience. The promise of the Spirit comes by faith at the time of salvation. But there is another baptism that occurs at salvation.

The New Testament teaches that we are placed in Christ by the Spirit. *1Corinthians 12:13* states: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The body here is the body of Christ. When I was baptized in water, I was not baptized by the Spirit and I was not baptized into one body—the body of Christ. The Spirit placed me into the body of Christ at the time of salvation. Every true believer is in the body of Christ. *Ephesians 5:29-30* says, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

The New Testament consistently teaches that the believer is in Christ. Paul refers to the believer being in Christ or simply in Him. Now, how do we get in Him? We are baptized into Him. *Romans 6:3-4* says: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

I used to fight the concept of Spirit baptism in Romans chapter six. I wanted to make it refer only to water baptism. I tried to deny Spirit baptism because I was taught against it by people I respected. However, I was meditating on verse three one time. It finally hit me that no matter how you cut or slice it, water baptism did not place me in Jesus Christ. What then is water baptism? Water baptism is an external, physical picture of what happened to me spiritually the moment I got saved.

A big hurdle for me was the "one baptism." How could there be two baptisms and yet one? I finally realized that the two baptisms are still one baptism. One is the inner reality occurring at salvation. The other is the outward picture of what happened at the moment of salvation. But they are still one. They are unified and undivided. I got into Christ when I got saved, and not when I got baptized.

If you expect water baptism to you get into Christ, you believe doctrinal heresy. You have to be careful. However, water baptism is the first step of obedience for the believer and it is a wonderful picture of the Spirit placing us into Christ. We

would not know about Spirit baptism unless God had told us about it. It is a spiritual truth. Yet, water baptism is external and visible. The two work together to give a unified understanding of our union with Christ through the Spirit.

What then is a Spirit baptism? Spirit baptism occurs when the Baptizer or Administrator is the Spirit, the Subject is the believer, and the Medium is Jesus. I am placed into Jesus Christ by the Spirit. When did that happen? Not when I got immersed into water, but when I trusted in Christ as my personal and eternal Saviour. It happened at the time of salvation.

Galatians 3:27 states: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." By one spirit are we all baptized into one body and that body is Jesus Christ. That is spirit baptism. Why then do we still have water baptism? Because it is an external picture our invisible union with Christ. Just as the Spirit placed me into Christ at the point of salvation, so the preacher takes someone and places them into the water as a picture of their union with Christ and as an act of obedience to Christ.

Baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Read Romans chapter six in context and you will see this symbology. It is an identification of the believers with Christ. In baptism, I am saying that I belong to Christ. I am giving outward testimony that I too am a Christian. **And, finally, I am identifying with a local group of believers in a church.**

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus put all of the believers present into the Holy Ghost. How do we get in on that today? Must we look for another Pentecost? No. We come into the promise of the Spirit by faith. When I trust in the Lord, and allow him to place the indwelling Spirit in me, then I get into the Spirit. See *Romans 8:9*. Also, at the very moment of salvation, the Spirit placed me into Jesus Christ. It is too confusing to call both of these events Spirit baptism. One is the baptism with the Holy Ghost; the other is Spirit baptism.

You do not need to seek the experience of Pentecost now; you get in on the benefits of the Spirit just by being saved. You may be disappointed. You want to have an experience. But you do not get that experience. You just get Christ and the indwelling Spirit—which is far better. You get in on the benefit without the experience. What a blessing this doctrine is. I am "accepted in the beloved" (*Ephesians 1:6*). Jesus is the beloved of the Father. God looks upon me as I am in Christ. That is how I am now sitting in heavenly places—I am in Christ (*Ephesians 2:6*).

- David F. Reagan