

# **George O. Wood: 3 Questions People Ask About Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

The World Assemblies of God family now totals close to 68 million people worshipping in over 365,000 churches. What the Lord has done around the world through Spirit-filled believers and Spirit-filled leaders is absolutely amazing. It is vital that we not lose the distinctive which has powered this growth: our reliance upon the Holy Spirit and our doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues.

I thought it might be helpful to review three questions which are often asked by persons inside and outside our fellowship about our focus on Spirit baptism. I trust these concise answers will be of benefit to you.

## **What is the baptism in the Holy Spirit?**

The New Testament notes three baptisms. The first is when the Spirit baptizes us into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13); we call this conversion. The second baptism is in water, the external evidence of our conversion (Acts 2:38,41). The third is when Christ baptizes us in the Spirit (Matt. 3:11).

In each case, baptism represents immersion: immersion into Christ, immersion into water, and immersion into the Holy Spirit. The agent of the baptism is different in each case: the Spirit in conversion, the person who baptizes another in water and Christ who baptizes in the Spirit. I love to refer to the baptism in the Spirit as being “overwhelmed in the Spirit.” That overwhelming can be subsequent to conversion (Acts 2:4) or contemporaneous with conversion (Acts 10:44-46). All three baptisms should be close together as part of what may be called the “conversion cluster.”

## **What is the relationship of speaking in tongues to the baptism in the Spirit?**

How do people know they are baptized in water? Well, they are wet. In other words, water baptism has a physical component. Baptism in the Spirit also has a physical component: speaking in other tongues. The doctrinal formulation for this is simply that tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Note the three descriptive words:

1. It is initial. It is a gateway entrance into the Spirit-empowered life. All through our Christian journey, speaking in other tongues becomes a vital component of prayer in providing praise to God that goes beyond our vocabulary limits and intercession in those moments when we do not know how to even frame our requests in a learned language.

2. It is physical. This means that supernatural speech is involved when we speak in a language we have not learned.

3. It is evidence. That is, just as people know they have been baptized in water because they got wet, so we know we have received the baptism in the Spirit because we have spoken in other tongues.

## **How do we receive the baptism in the Spirit?**

Jesus said that we should ask to receive (Luke 11:13). That is, there must be a hunger or desire in our hearts. We also must remember that we are speaking of the Holy Spirit; thus, we must consciously examine our lives and ask Him to cleanse our hearts.

It often helps to find someone who has received the baptism in the Spirit to lay hands on us and pray for us to receive.

Finally, as the Spirit begins to form unknown words in our thoughts, we must speak them out: The Spirit is wanting to pray through us in a language we do not understand. However,

we must remember that the baptism in the Spirit is a starting point for living all our days in the fullness of the Spirit and in His empowerment of our lives. {eoa}

*This article originally appeared in WAGF (World Assemblies of God Fellowship) Connection magazine. Used with permission.*