

Why the Baptism in the Holy Spirit?

At the moment we accept Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts. So what more do we need? POWER!

If you have received Jesus as your Savior, God is living in you. By the Holy Spirit He has joined Himself to your spirit. Your spirit, the very inmost part of you, is alive, and not only alive but also filled with all the wonderful joy, and love, and peace, and glory of God Himself.

“If any man be in Christ,” says the apostle Paul, “he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17, KJV). He also says that Christians are seated in heavenly places with Christ (see Eph. 2:6).

If you are like many people, you will respond at this point:

“Well, I am different. Something certainly did happen to me when I invited Jesus into my heart, and for a while I had a deep sense of the love and joy you are talking about. I really wanted to tell everyone about it, too.

“But now I seem to be cooling off. Life isn’t all that different anymore. I still know that things have changed deep down inside me somewhere, but most of the time I feel just about as I did before. In the mornings, when I get away by myself and pray, I do sometimes feel God’s presence, but I sure can’t keep track of Him during the day!”

Why is this? It’s not hard to understand if you will accept what the Bible says about the nature of man, that you are a threefold being: spirit, soul and body (see 1 Thess. 5:23).

If you are still thinking of yourself as only two parts—soul and body—then you will inevitably confuse your psychological reactions with your spiritual life, and this is not only

confusing to the understanding, it can actually, in this psychological age, lead you into false teaching. Many fine Bible teachers today, under the pressure of psychology, are identifying the spirit of man with the “unconscious mind” or the “deep psyche,” simply because they do not take seriously the Bible’s ability to divide between the soul and the spirit (see Heb. 4:12).

But if you make this division, you not only will be able to grasp what happens in the baptism of the Holy Spirit but also will find yourself able to account for other things in your Christian life that may have puzzled you.

When you received Jesus as your Savior, your spirit came alive, began to assert its new life and take its rightful place as head over your soul –your psychological part (intellect, will and emotions)–and your body, your physical part. Your body and soul, however, were accustomed to “running the show,” and it wasn’t long before they had pretty much overwhelmed your new life in the Spirit and resumed the driver’s seat.

When you pray in the morning, the busyness of your soul and body is quieted; your spirit has a chance to let you know He is there; and at this, as well as at other times, you get an inkling that deep inside you, the new life is very real.

But as soon as the clamor of existence begins again, you automatically start to trust your soul and body rather than your spirit. You were so accustomed to living by your thoughts, feelings and desires–by your soul, your psychological being–and by the demands of your body, that you soon lost track of the voice of the newly living spirit deep within you. It would seem that something needs to happen to your soul and body before your spirit can gain stronger control.

This “something” that needs to happen is that the Holy Spirit,

who is living in your spirit, needs to flow out to fill your soul and body. This is described in the Scripture in a variety of ways. Just as the experience of accepting Jesus is spoken of throughout the Bible in different ways, so a number of descriptions are given of the next experience: "baptism in (or with) the Holy Spirit," "receiving the Holy Spirit," "Pentecost," "receiving power," the Holy Spirit to "come upon" or "fall upon" a person. All these are expressions of the same truth, viewed from different sides.

There is much difference of opinion over what terminology to use. However, we feel on especially safe scriptural ground using the term "baptism in the Holy Spirit," since quite an impressive list of biblical persons so used it: God the Father (see John 1:33), God the Son (see Acts 1:5) and God the Holy Spirit, who is, of course, the inspirer of the Scriptures in which these expressions are found. There were also John the Baptist (see Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33); the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, in the places just cited; and the apostle Peter (see Acts 11:16). If you will read these references carefully and compare them, you will see in each case it is not salvation that is spoken of, but a second experience.

This is called in the Scriptures "the baptism in the Holy Spirit" because it is a baptism, meaning a drenching, an overflowing, a saturating of your soul and body with the Holy Spirit. When the Bible speaks of Jesus "baptizing" in the Holy Spirit, we immediately visualize something external, somebody being put into something.

However, the word "baptize" in Greek means to completely suffuse—it is used in classical Greek of a sunken, water-logged ship—so it does not really make any difference whether Jesus, to suffuse our souls and bodies, immerses us in the Holy Spirit in an external sense of the word, whether He inundates us from the outside or whether He causes the Spirit to rise and overflow from where He is living inside us.

Probably both pictures are true—He “comes upon us” both from outside and inside, but it is important to remember that the Holy Spirit is living in you, and therefore it is from within that He can flood your soul and body.

Jesus says, “‘He that believeth on me ... out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water [the Holy Spirit]’” (John 7:38, emphasis added). The wording in The Amplified Bible is, “From his innermost being shall flow” (emphasis added).

When we receive Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes in, but as we continue to trust and believe Jesus, the indwelling Spirit can pour out to inundate, or baptize, our soul and body and refresh the world around.

This, too, is why again and again in Scripture the first normative evidence of the Pentecost experience is an outpouring: “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues” (Acts 2:4, KJV).

Some are puzzled by the term “receiving the Holy Spirit.” A Christian may ask the question: “How can I receive the Holy Spirit when I already have Him living in me?” This expression can be understood easily if we remember that we are talking about a Person, not a thing or a quantity of something.

Some have talked about the Holy Spirit in a quantitative way—as if you could receive some of the Holy Spirit at salvation and some more at a later date. But if the Holy Spirit is a Person, which He is, then He is either living in you or He isn’t.

The Person of the Holy Spirit has been living in your “house” ever since your new birth—your salvation—but when you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, you fully acknowledge His Presence and receive His gifts.

Let us sum up, then, by saying that the first experience of the Christian life, salvation, is the incoming of the Holy

Spirit, through Jesus Christ, to give us new life—God’s life, eternal life. The second experience is the receiving or making welcome of the Holy Spirit, so that Jesus can cause Him to pour out this new life from our spirits to baptize our souls and bodies, and then the world around, with His refreshing and renewing power.

“Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water!” The Greek word used here for “belly” is *koilia*, which refers literally to the physical body. It is by means of the physical body and its speech and actions that we contact our environment and the people around us. The world is not going to be helped or challenged until it sees and hears and experiences Jesus’ life flowing from us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Imagine an irrigation canal in Southern California or some other area that is normally arid most of the year. The canal is dry and so are the fields around. All the vegetation is dried up and dead. Then the gates from the reservoir are opened, and the canal begins to fill with water.

First of all, the canal itself is refreshed! The cool flow of water carries away debris and slakes the dust. Next, grass and flowers begin to spring up along the banks, and the trees on either side of the canal become fresh and green. But it doesn’t stop there; all the way along the canal, farmers open the gates, and the life-giving water pours out into the fields to make the “desert blossom as the rose.”

So it is with you and me. The reservoir, the well, is in us when we become Christians. Then, when we allow the indwelling living water of the Spirit to flow out into our souls and bodies, we are refreshed first.

Our minds come alive in a new way to God’s reality. We begin to think of Him, even dream of Him, with a new frequency and joy. Our emotions respond, and we begin to be happy in Him.

Our will responds, and we begin to want to do what He wants. Our bodies respond, not only with feelings of well-being, but also with actual renewed strength and health and youth. Then the living water begins to pour out to others, and they see the power and love of Jesus in His people. He is now able to use us to refresh the world around us.

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