

Verna Linzey: Spirit Baptism: A Fresh Perspective

The definition of “the baptism with the Holy Spirit” is *the reception of the Holy Spirit as confirmed by speaking in tongues*.

Many people wonder why we use the term “baptism.” David du Plessis, in *The Spirit Bade Me Go*, explains that God gave the word to John the Baptist when John told the people, “I baptize you with water for repentance. . . . He [Christ] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt. 3:11). Further, John the Baptist stated, “the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit’” (John 1:33).

Jesus confirmed this statement when He said to the disciples, “For John baptized with water; but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5). Thus Christ began “His ministry of baptizing in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This was the first time that any followers of Christ were baptized in the Holy Spirit by Him” (Du Plessis, 69).

F. M. Ellis, in his article “The Holy Spirit and the Christian,” contends that such terms as “Baptized with the Holy Spirit,” “The Holy Spirit fell on them,” “The Holy Spirit came,” “Receive the Holy Spirit,” “The power of the Holy Spirit,” “The fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (p. 124) are applied to believers in Christ—not to people who are not believers.

We know that the Holy Spirit has a ministry to believers that does not apply to unbelievers. He adds, “From the Christ, ‘the organ of external revelation,’ attention is being turned to

the Holy Spirit—‘the organ of internal revelation.’ From the Advocate for us, who is with the Father, Christians are earnestly asking to know more of the advocate with us, who is here among us” (Ellis, 125). That Spirit within us comes with the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The experience the disciples received on the Day of Pentecost—the same experience received by many thousands of believers since—is commonly called “the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.”

John the Baptist’s prediction concerning Jesus was that “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt. 3:11). And Christ Himself verified the term when He promised the disciples, “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5). Again the term was verified in Acts 11:16 after its initial fulfillment in the second chapter of Acts.

However, the Scriptures do not limit themselves to a single term for that experience, notes Frank B. Rice, in “Practical Implication of Terms Describing the Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” Paraclete 3, #1, because there are several terms used even of that experience of the first Pentecost (Rice, 7), for example these: “Baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5), “the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (1:8), “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (2:4), “I will pour out of my Spirit upon all people” (2:17), “the promised Holy Spirit . . . poured out” (2:33), “you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (2:38) (Rice, 7).

That this one experience is designated many ways in the Bible, R. A. Torrey, in his book *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, verifies by pointing out the most important listings. In Acts 1:5 Jesus said, “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.” In Acts 2:4, when this promise was fulfilled, we read, “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” In Acts 1:4 the same experience is spoken of as “the promise of the Father,” and in Luke 24:49 as “the promise of

my Father” and “endued with power from on high.”

By comparing Acts 10:44, 45, and 47 with Acts 11:15-16, we see that the expressions “the Holy Ghost fell on them” and “the gift of the Holy Ghost” and “received the Holy Ghost” are all equivalent to “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (Torrey, 13-14).

Don Basham, in *A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism*, says that the Greek term for baptism can mean “identification with” and “overwhelming;” therefore, when Jesus said, “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5), Basham likes to translate it this way: “You will be flooded with the Holy Spirit” (Basham, 65).

In like manner, Rice points out that a baptism is “an overwhelming experience. The Greek equivalent may be translated ‘to make whelmed’” (Rice, 8). The experience had a life-changing impact on those who received. The Holy Spirit entered their lives to change them. In the same way,

Likewise, He enters our lives to change us, to empower us for God’s service, to help us bring honor to Christ Jesus and to be our constant companion—both Counselor and Comforter.