
THE BAPTISM AND GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Is it relevant to the church today?

Broad definition: An experience (often subsequent to conversion) in which the Holy Spirit comes upon an individual believer to give power and boldness, deepen their Christian walk, enable them to be a more victorious Christian and the give one of more spiritual gifts described in the New testament.

- some Christians believe there is no distinction between conversion and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit
 - such a position usually holds that the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit are “not for today”
- others (described as *Pentecostal*, or *Charismatic*) believe the experience is a separate encounter, for those who are already Christians, and that the “gifts” continue to operate.

What follows is a Pentecostal perspective.

1. Enduement with Power Promised

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...” (Acts 1:8).

A promise:

- first given to those disciples who obeyed Jesus and waited in the Upper Room;
- applicable to all Christians - Acts 2:38, 39;
- good for every generation - Acts 2:38, 39.
- of “power” (*δύναμις* - *dynamis* = *strength, power, ability*) - Acts 4:8-14, 33; 9:17-20; 10:46; Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 2:4 (cf Micah 3:8);
- to do Jesus’ works & greater (*μείζων* - *meizōn* = *greater, larger, stronger*) - John 14:12.

Also enables:

- ministry in the church - Acts 6:3
- supernatural discernment - Acts 5:1-10

Supernatural power, accompanied in the NT by supernatural manifestations, eg Acts 2:4.

Initially evidenced in Acts by speaking in other tongues (ie languages the recipients had not learned). Described as a “baptism” (*βαπτίζω* = *baptizō* = *dip, submerge, immerse*) seven times in the New Testament, eg Acts 1:5; Matthew 3:11, 12; Luke 3:16.

2. Subsequent to Conversion

“Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? (Acts 19:2)

- Disciples - John 15::3, 5 & 20:22 with Acts 1:8
- Paul - Acts 9:9-17
- Samaritan Christians - Acts 8:15-16

- Ephesian Christians - Acts 19:1-6 (21 years after the Day of Pentecost)

In the case of the household of Cornelius (sometimes called the “Gentile Pentecost”), there was no time lapse between the two events - Acts 10:43-48.

3. The Initial Evidence

Speaking in unlearned language/s was the initial sign in Acts (2:4; 10:44-46; 19:1-6). Implied in 8:14-19. Pentecostal Christians believe that the initial sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is always/usually speaking in tongues.

4. Pre-conditions

- repentance; a clean heart - Acts 2:38; John 14:17
- a seeking heart - Acts 1:4; Luke 11:13; John 7:37
- a right attitude, eg unity among believers on the Day of Pentecost - Acts 1:14
- sometimes imparted with the laying on of hands by other Christians - Acts 8:15
- unified prayer - Acts 4:31
- sometimes spontaneous - Acts 10:45
- faith - Luke 11:13; Galatians 3:14
- individual prayer - Acts 9:19-17
- obedience and submission to the will of God - Acts 5:32
- an attitude of worship - Luke 24:35; Acts 10:46

4. Its Continuous Aspect

Being “filled with the Spirit” is a singular event. However, it is not a climax in and of itself.

Ephesians 5:18b refers to being “filled” in the present continuous tense, ie “be being filled”. In Acts, some people were referred to as being “full of the Holy Spirit” - Acts 6:3; 7:55; 11:24. Others received supplementary fillings, eg Acts 4:31.

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT A CLIMAX, FOR ITS OWN SAKE, BUT AN OPEN DOOR TO THE POWER AND HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, IN THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

1. The General Nature of the Gifts

Important to distinguish between the gifts and the Giver. The Holy Spirit is the gift of the Father, through Christ - Acts 2:33.

He distributes His gifts (*charismata x 17 times*) according to the mind of God - 1 Corinthians 12:4, 7, 11.

- the gifts of the Holy Spirit are in place to build up the church (individually and corporately)
- it is therefore important that we focus on the giver, and not the gifts.

2. The Variety of the Gifts

The gifts of the Holy Spirit were common in the early Christian church and remain valid today. There is no standard order in which the Bible lists or characterizes the gifts. Some are described as “charismatic” or “spiritual gifts” (lit. “spirituals”, cf nine gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10), while others are gifts for service and outreach.

Can be grouped and classified as:

- *Gifts of Revelation:*
 - word of wisdom
 - word of knowledge
 - discernings of spirits
- *Gifts of power*
 - faith
 - miracles
 - healings
- *Gifts of utterance*
 - prophecy
 - tongues
 - interpretation of tongues

a The Word of Wisdom

Supernatural use of God’s wisdom, to meet particular situations. In the Bible referred to:

- interpreting dreams - Acts 7:10
- interpreting something - Revelation 13:18; 17:9
- skilful management of affairs - Acts 6:3,15:13-21
- prudence in dealing with those outside of the church - Colossians 4:5
- skill in imparting Christian truth - Colossians 1:28
- knowledge to live uprightly - James 1:5;3:13, 17
- defending Christ’s cause - Luke 21:12-15; Acts 4:8-14; 6:10 (even in face of danger)
- interpreting and applying Scripture - Matthew 13:54; Mark 6:12; Acts 6:10
- dispensing justice - 1 Kings 3:16-28; John 8:7
- skill in practical matters - Exodus 31:3
- leadership - Deuteronomy 34:9

Different from human wisdom, learning. A “word” (logos) rather than a skill.

b The Word of Knowledge

Supernatural awareness and utterance of facts, not the normal possession of the user, eg:

- Jesus’ knowledge of Nathaniel (John 1:48-50) and the woman at the well - John 4:17, 18, 29

- Peter's discernment of sin - Acts 5:1-6
- Paul's foreknowledge about the shipwreck - Acts 27:10
- knowledge of things that belong to God - Romans 11:33
- supernaturally imparted intelligence and understanding - Ephesians 3:19
- knowledge concerning Divine and human duties - Romans 2:20; Colossians 2:3

c Faith

Different from "saving faith", or faithfulness (the "fruit" of the Spirit).

Impartation of faith by the Holy Spirit for special circumstances. For example, faith given by the Holy Spirit for protection in times of danger, or for divine provision.

Paul exhibited this gift on a number of occasions (probably in conjunction with other gifts), eg

- smiting Elymas with blindness Acts 13:11
- restoring Eutychus - Acts 20:12
- casting out demon in Philippi - Acts 16:18
- healing the lame man in Lystra - Acts 14:10

d The Gifts of Healing

Note that "gifts" is plural in the Greek text.

Supernatural ability to apply healings in a number of circumstances, or different illnesses/afflictions. Does not make men "healers"- the focus remains on Jesus Christ.

Used for attracting people to the Gospel, eg

- healing of lame man at Temple gate in Jerusalem - Acts 3:6
- in Samaria - Acts 8:6,7;
- the healing of Aeneas - Acts 9:35;
- resurrection of Tabitha - Acts 9:40
- resurrection of Eutychus - Acts 20:12
- healing of father of Publius on Malta - Acts 28:8-10

e The Workings of Miracles

Lit. "works of power". Distinct from gifts of healings. May be involved in connection with the conflict between God and Satan, eg casting out demons. To demonstrate the power of God, the reality of the Gospel, the pre-eminence of Christ, eg Acts 19:11, 12; 5:12-15. "Gifts" is plural in the Greek, ie variety of forms or manifestations of the gift.

f Prophecy

Supernaturally inspired utterance (προφητεία - *prophēteia* = *divinely inspired declaration of the purposes of God*), which may involve the future, but also be about current issues, eg Agabus' prophecies about Paul - Acts 21:10-11, and a great famine - Acts 11:27, 28. Not to be confused with the "office" of prophet (cf Ephesians 4:11, Acts 15:32)

The Bible encourages all to seek the gift of prophecy. There is variety in the expression of the gift, in connection with edification, exhortation and comfort - 1 Corinthians 14:3. Also for

teaching - 1 Corinthians 14:31. It is a vehicle the Holy Spirit uses to speak to Christians and to bring people to Christ - 1 Corinthians 14:24. Prophecy must be tested (1 Corinthians 14:29) but not despised (1 Thessalonians 5:20).

g Discernings of Spirits

Again, note plural. Bible speaks of three spirits: Spirit of God; spirit of man; Satan & evil spirits. We are surrounded by angels, evil spirits, etc. The gift of discernment (διάκρισις - *diakrīsis* = distinguishing, discerning, judging) is given to help the church discern between good and evil spirits (implying that such discernment requires a gift of God).

Examples of this gift in the New Testament include:

- Jesus cast our demons through the ministry of the Holy Spirit - Matthew 12:28
- the unclean spirit in the slave girl in Philippi - Acts 16::16-18
- the evil spirit at work in Elymas the sorcerer - Acts 13:8-11

h Tongues

Ability to speak in a tongue the user has never learned (may or may not be a human language, cf Acts 2:6-11; 1 Corinthians 13:1; however in documented New Testament cases they were usually recognised as languages, supernaturally enabled nevertheless; the Greek word means “languages”. 1 Corinthians 13:1 refers to the “tongues of men and of angels”).

Some words may be uttered to God alone - 1 Corinthians 14:2; some may be for the church at large - 1 Corinthians 14:5.

Not all who speak in tongues are exercising the gift of tongues for the church.

i Interpretation of Tongues

Renders understandable utterances in other tongues.

Two meanings: to give a translation; to explain meaning and application.

Tongues and interpretation are somewhat equal to prophecy - 1 Corinthians 14:5.

Other Gifts

The gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church are diverse. 1 Corinthians 12:28-3 and Romans 12:4-8 identify gifts of the Spirit over and above those listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, viz.

- ministry (service)
- teaching
- encouraging
- liberal giving
- leadership, ruling
- mercy, compassion
- administrators

“Office gifts” are specific offices established by the Holy Spirit in the church for oversight and

leadership (Ephesians 4:8-12).

“Service gifts” are distributed by the Holy Spirit to enable us to serve with excellence and passion (Romans 12:6-8).

Requirements for Receiving the Gifts

- submission to God’s Will, ie what God wants (not demanding, comparing, boasting)
- holy ambition - desire spiritual gifts - 1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1; a godly focus and aim
- faith - some churches emphasize “tarrying”, but the real issue is faith, knowing it is not us, but the Holy Spirit in us that brings results
- yieldedness - we are not to quench the working of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) through negligence or opposition. “Stir up the gifts” - 2 Timothy 1:6; 4:14.

Regulation of the Gifts

- The gifts are given for: establishment of the church; edification of the church; service; out-reach.

There have been many excesses during the history of Christianity. The Corinthian Christians, to whom Paul wrote his first letter, were exercising gifts without a concern for, or recognition of, the unity of the Body of Christ. (Some theologians take lessons from the Corinthian church and apply them broadly to the church, with the aim of restricting or banning the operation of the gifts.) What rules does the NT teach?

- proportionate value - 1 Corinthians 14:5-19; a lot depends on the context of their use
- edification - the purpose of the gifts is to build up people
- wisdom - “use common sense”
- self-control - those exercising gifts are able to control them - 1 Corinthians 14:32
- orderliness - activity in church to be decent & in order. 1 Corinthians 14:40
- teachableness - vv 36, 37

The test is not what gifts we have, but whether or not we know we have them and are humbly and confidently using them as the Holy Spirit intended (1 Peter 4:10).

Testing the Gifts

The gifts need to be tested, because false manifestations occur > Satan counterfeits the genuine work of God - Matthew 7:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 John 4:1.

All of the gifts can be imitated eg “faith” healers; speaking in tongues in Inuit communities; false prophecies (in Christ’s name), witchdoctors casting out demons. However, also need to ensure “testing” is not based on misunderstanding of the gifts, fear or interpersonal issues.

Look for:

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- loyalty to Christ - an evidence that the person using the gift is doing so under the Holy Spirit's influence. Jesus will be the focus and the desire will be to glorify Him;
 - the practical test - look for the evidence/fruit/consistency in the life of the user;
 - the doctrinal test - no manifestation will contradict the Scriptures.