

Are Believers to Seek Baptism in The Spirit?

One of the more controversial doctrines of our day is Spirit Baptism. According to many churches believers can and should seek out an experience called the *baptism of The Holy Spirit*.

Most *charismatic* churches claim that each believer has the Spirit of God within them the moment they are saved. However, they do not have the fullness of the Spirit until they are “baptized” in The Holy Spirit. Most *charismatic* churches teach that one must *speak in tongues* as the sign that one is baptized in The Spirit.

Some *Pentecostal* groups (which differ slightly from Charismatics) go so far as to claim that unless you receive the baptism of the Spirit which must include *speaking in tongues*, that person is not truly saved.

Charismatic and pentecostal churches vary widely depending on the denomination and the preacher. But the goal of both is to be baptized by the Spirit. The sign of the Spirit’s baptism for both is speaking in tongues. There are exceptions but this doctrine is the norm among charismatics and pentecostals. So if you do not speak in tongues then according to charismatics and pentecostals you do not have the fullness of The Spirit. According to Pentecostal, you may not even be saved.

This doctrine has led to widespread cases of spiritual abuse. While the desire to be closer to God is a good desire, the methods employed rarely accomplish this worthy goal. Further these methods are found nowhere in Scripture. Because these groups claim the sign of the Spirit is speaking in tongues these groups quite often pressure individuals to learn how to speak in tongues. Many of these groups and churches have classes and methods for how to speaking in tongues. For example, in a “tongues class” instructors will coach you to repeat certain words really fast continuously. They claim that eventually The Holy Spirit will change your gibberish into an authentic gift of speaking in tongues. And if you get the the gift of tongues (no matter how it is manufactured) then there is relief. Finally I have experienced the sign that I have been baptized by the Spirit.

Contrast that common experience with the book of Acts. In Acts The Holy Spirit comes suddenly into the upper room. It takes people by surprise. It is an act of God not manufactured by techniques.

This is also true of the outpouring of The Holy Spirit to the gentiles; ***Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵ All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because***

the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶

For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.

Notice that in Acts 2 The Spirit fell on believing Jews and they spoke in tongues proclaiming the wonders of God in all sorts of foreign languages they had not learned. And now the outpouring of the Spirit had occurred for the first time among uncircumcised Gentiles. And this outpouring was also accompanied by Gentiles speaking the wonders of God in languages unknown to them.

Taken together the outpouring of The Spirit to the Jews and Gentiles fulfilled the prophecy that God would speak to this people in foreign tongues / languages and still they would not respond to Him. This outpouring of the Spirit resulting in tongues was a prophetic warning to those Jews who failed to believe that The Messiah had come and He had sent His Spirit to assist Him in building His church. They would not believe the prophets so God send a word of prophecy through His Spirit by many voices.

The tongues of Acts is a one time experience that is not repeated elsewhere. It is clearly linked to the coming of the Spirit to usher in a new age of The Church. This announcement is needed only once.

There is another type of “speaking in tongues” mentioned in 1 Corinthians that acts like a prayer language or a prophetic gift. When one speaks in the “tongues of angels” according to 1 Corinthians someone else with a “gift of interpreting tongues” must be present in order to interpret the message given through the gift of tongues. Thus tongues for the church has a prophetic function.

Paul goes on to state that not everyone has this gift of speaking in tongues. It is stated clearly in Scripture that every believer DOES NOT HAVE THIS GIFT.

1 Corinthians 12:30

All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

The rhetorical answer to Paul’s question is NO! Not all have the gift of speaking in tongues.

Since every believer does not have this gift of tongues then it can not be the sign that one has been baptized by The Spirit into the body of Christ.

Conclusion: Speaking in tongues is not for every believer. And speaking in tongues is not the sign of the baptism of The Spirit.

So let's answer a few key questions. For a more exhaustive study speak to a pastor or elder.

Question 1: Does the bible speak about Spirit Baptism? If so, in what context?

Answer: Yes, the bible does speak of Spirit Baptism. Spirit Baptism is spoken of in the context of receiving Jesus Christ and believing the gospel for salvation. A great summary of this teaching is;

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NASB)

¹³ For by one Spirit we were **all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

In this passage Paul makes it abundantly clear that ALL were baptized. In other words, every believer that is saved is also baptized by The Holy Spirit. From the context and from other passages it is clear that the moment we are born again we are baptized by The Holy Spirit. This Spirit baptism is the sign that we have been adopted into the family of God. This Spirit baptism is the sign that we have been "sealed" by the Spirit for eternal life.

Ephesians 1:13

¹³ ***In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,***

According to this passage one is “sealed” (or baptized) by The Spirit the moment he or she **believed** Jesus Christ and the gospel message.

Acts 2:38

³⁸ ***Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***

The instructions in this passage are to repent and then be baptized (with water) as a sign that he or she had been forgiven of their sins. The result is that each believer “*will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*”

Question 2: What is the difference between being *baptized* with The Spirit and being **filled** with The Spirit?

Answer: ***The baptism of The Spirit*** is the means used by God to adopt us into the body of Jesus Christ. Every believer receives the baptism of The Spirit the moment they believe. The sign of the baptism are called the “fruits” of The Spirit spoken of in Galatians. The proof you have the Holy Spirit includes such things as “***peace, patient, joy, long suffering and love...***” These are characteristics of The Holy Spirit. When you are baptized by the Spirit you take on His attributes of peace and patience

and so on. The proof that you are saved is that you have the attributes of The Spirit that you can not manufacture on your own apart from God. So if you received Jesus Christ by faith as your Lord and Savior and you find yourself surprised by the sudden presence of love or peace or joy then you have The Holy Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit are the proof that your roots are planted in God. The ***baptism of The Spirit*** occurs only once, the moment you receive Jesus Christ.

However, the bible tell us to continually seek the ***filling of The Spirit***. The filling of the Spirit occurs when The Spirit of God displays His power through us so that we can live a holy life and accomplish things for the glory of God that we can not do on our own. In scripture the result of the ***filling*** of The Spirit are things like; “speaking the word boldly” or rejoicing even while suffering for the name of Christ. Being filled with the Spirit is what powers up the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14. When you are filled with the Spirit you may be able to suddenly find the ability to share your faith or serve other in authentic love wanting nothing in return.

In Ephesians 5 Paul tells us the following;

Ephesians 5:18

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

Question 3: We are told to be “filled” with The Spirit. But how can we be filled?

Answer: First, ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit every day. And second, make sure that you are not double minded. In other words, make sure that in your heart you are willing to follow Christ and do what He says. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to allow you to follow Christ and build His church. If you are not willing to obey Jesus then there is no reason to expect that you will be filled.

Seek God in prayer, read the word, and seek to glorify God and in the process of seeking Him God will transform your desires. He will fill you with His Spirit.