

**BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**  
**POSITION PAPER**  
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Since the early days of the twentieth century, many Christian believers have taught and received a spiritual experience they call the baptism in the Holy Spirit. At the present time, hundreds of millions of believers identify themselves with the movement that teaches and encourages the reception of that experience. The global expansion of that movement demonstrates the words of Jesus Christ to His disciples that when the promised Holy Spirit came upon them, they would receive power to be His witnesses to all the world (Acts 1:5,8).

The New Testament emphasizes the centrality of the Holy Spirit's role in the ministry of Jesus and the continuation of that role in the Early Church. Jesus' public ministry was launched by the Holy Spirit coming upon Him (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). The Book of Acts presents an extension of that ministry through the disciples by means of the empowering Holy Spirit.

The most distinguishing features of the baptism in the Holy Spirit are that: (1) it is theologically and experientially distinguishable from and subsequent to the new birth, (2) it is accompanied by speaking in tongues, and (3) it is distinct in purpose from the Spirit's work of regenerating the heart and life of a repentant sinner.

**The Term "Baptism in the Holy Spirit"**

The term "baptism in the Holy Spirit" does not occur in Scripture. It is a convenient designation for the experience predicted by John the Baptist that Jesus would "baptize *in* [Greek *en*] the Holy Spirit"<sup>1</sup> (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33) and is repeated by both Jesus (Acts 1:5) and Peter (Acts 11:16). It is significant that the expression occurs in all the Gospels as well as in the Book of Acts. The imagery of baptism portrays immersion, as seen in John the Baptist's analogy between the baptism in water that he administered and the baptism in the Spirit that Jesus would administer.

Being baptized in the Spirit must be differentiated from Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 12:13 which, following the Greek word order, reads: "by [*en*] one Spirit we all into one body were baptized." The context of that passage demonstrates that "by" is the best translation, indicating that the Holy Spirit is the instrument or means by which the baptizing takes place.<sup>2</sup> In verses 3 and 9 of the chapter, Paul uses the same preposition twice in each verse to indicate an activity of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, "baptized into one body" speaks about the Spirit's work of incorporating a repentant sinner into the body of Christ (see Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27 for the equivalent expression "baptized into Christ"). This is the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5; it is the indispensable, all-important baptism that results in the "one body" of verse 4.

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<sup>1</sup> Literal translation. All biblical quotations are from the New International Version (NIV) except as otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Some reliable New Testament translations that opt for "by" include NIV, NASB updated, NKJV, and KJV.

To summarize: At conversion, the Spirit baptizes into Christ/the body of Christ; in a subsequent and distinct experience, Christ will baptize in the Holy Spirit.

### **Other Biblical Terms for Spirit Baptism**

Various biblical terms are used for this experience, especially in the Book of Acts, which records the initial descent of the Spirit upon Jesus' disciples and gives examples of the Spirit's similar encounters with God's people. The following expressions in Acts are used interchangeably for the experience:

- baptized in the Spirit—1:5; 11:16; see also Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33. The term "Spirit baptism" often serves as a useful substitute and is employed in this paper.
- the Spirit coming, or falling, upon—1:8; 8:16; 10:44; 11:15; 19:6; see also Luke 1:35; 3:22
- the Spirit poured out—2:17,18; 10:45
- the gift my Father promised—1:4
- the gift of the Spirit—2:38; 10:45; 11:17
- the gift of God—8:20; 11:17; 15:8
- receiving the Spirit—8:15,17,19; 19:2
- filled with the Spirit—2:4; 9:17; also Luke 1:15,41,67. This expression, along with "full of the Spirit," has a wider application in Luke's writings. Paul's command to be "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18) does not refer to the initial fullness of the Spirit; it is an injunction to keep on being filled with the Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Not one of these terms fully conveys all that the experience involves. They are metaphors conveying the idea that the recipients are thoroughly dominated or overwhelmed by the Spirit, who already dwells in them (Romans 8:9,14–16; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 4:6).

### **SUBSEQUENCE AND SEPARABILITY Old Testament Background**

The outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) was the climax of God's promises, made centuries before, about the institution of the new covenant and the coming of the age of the Spirit. The Old Testament is indispensable for understanding the coming of the Holy Spirit to believers under the new covenant. Two prophetic passages are especially significant—Ezekiel 36:25–27 and Joel 2:28,29:

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days (Joel 2:28–29).

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<sup>3</sup> The verb is in the Greek present tense, which conveys the meaning of a continuing or ongoing action.

The Ezekiel passage speaks about cleansing new believers from all spiritual filthiness and replacing their heart of stone with a “new heart” and a “heart of flesh.” This takes place as a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who will enable them to live in obedience to God's decrees and laws. The promise predicts the New Testament teaching about regeneration. Jesus spoke of the need to be “born of the Spirit” (John 3:5,8) and Paul, echoing Ezekiel's prophecy, says that God “saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). The result is an altered lifestyle made possible by the indwelling Spirit.

Joel's prophecy differs substantially from Ezekiel's. It speaks of a dramatic pouring out of the Spirit that results in prophesying, dreams, and visions. The term *charismatic* in our day has come to identify those who believe in and experience, personally and corporately, the dynamic way the Spirit manifests himself through various gifts, such as those enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12:7–10.<sup>4</sup> On the Day of Pentecost, the disciples were “filled with the Holy Spirit,” which Peter says was in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:16–21).

The prophecies of Ezekiel and Joel, however, do not predict two separate, historic comings of the Holy Spirit. They represent two aspects of the one overall promise that includes both the Spirit's indwelling and His filling or empowering of God's people.

### **Importance of Luke's Writings**

Luke's writings—the third Gospel and the Book of Acts—provide the clearest understanding of the baptism in the Spirit. Luke, in addition to being an accurate historian, is also a theologian in his own right and uses the medium of historical narrative to convey theological truth.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the four Gospels, the only undisputed references to John the Baptist's prediction of Spirit baptism are in the Book of Acts (1:5; 11:16). In addition, Luke's is the only Gospel that has two sayings of Jesus that relate directly to Spirit baptism: “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (11:13); “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (24:49).

The opening chapter of Acts picks up the theme of these promises. Jesus told His disciples: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with [*en*] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with [*en*] the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4,5); “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The entire Book of Acts is a commentary on these verses, elaborating on the two related themes of spiritual empowerment and the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. It is therefore necessary to explore what Luke says about Spirit baptism.

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<sup>4</sup> The Greek word *charisma*, however, has a wider range of meanings in the NT. Its basic meaning is that it is a gracious gift.

<sup>5</sup> See I. Howard Marshall's, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970.

This emphasis in Luke's writings, however, does not minimize other important aspects of the Holy Spirit's ministry in non-Lukan writings as, for example, in John 14–16; Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 12–14. Nor does it imply that all non-Lukan writers are silent on the matter of Spirit baptism or that Luke limits the Spirit's activity only to Spirit baptism.

It is important to recognize that Luke wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Since Luke-Acts is historical in nature, Luke selected incidents and sayings that emphasize the dynamic aspect of the Spirit's work.

The first four chapters of Luke's Gospel present a clear picture that the promised age of the Spirit was being inaugurated. Luke portrays the activity of the Holy Spirit in a manner clearly reminiscent of the prophecy of Joel. For four hundred years the activity of the Spirit among God's people had been virtually absent. It now bursts forth in a succession of events related to the births of both John the Baptist and Jesus, and to the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. Angelic visitations, miraculous conceptions, prophetic utterances, the Spirit's descent upon Jesus at His baptism, the empowerment of Jesus for His earthly ministry—these are all recorded in rapid succession in order to emphasize the dawn of the promised age.

### **Methodology Followed**

Narrative accounts recorded in Acts in which believers experience an initial filling of the Spirit have a direct bearing on the questions of whether Spirit baptism is separate from regeneration and whether speaking in tongues is a necessary component of the experience. The inductive method will be employed in looking at these incidents; it is a valid form of logic that attempts to form a conclusion based on the study of individual incidents or statements.<sup>6</sup>

### **“Subsequence” in Acts**

**The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–21)**. The first instance of disciples receiving a charismatic-type of experience occurred on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). The coming of the Spirit on that day was unprecedented; it was a unique, historic, once-for-all and unrepeatable event connected with the institution of the new covenant. But as Acts indicates, at a personal level the disciples' experience at Pentecost serves as a paradigm for later believers as well (8:14–20; 9:17; 10:44–48; 19:1–7).

Was the Pentecost experience of the disciples “subsequent” to their conversion? On one occasion Jesus told seventy-two of His disciples to “rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). It is not necessary to pinpoint the precise moment of their regeneration in the New Testament sense of that word. Had they died prior to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, they surely would have gone into the presence of the Lord. Many scholars, however, see the disciples' new-birth experience occurring at the time the resurrected Jesus “breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ ” (John 20:22).

It is significant that the New Testament nowhere equates the expression “filled with the Holy Spirit” (verse 4) with regeneration. It is always used in connection with persons who are already believers.

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<sup>6</sup> The formulated doctrine of the Trinity is the result of an inductive study of Scripture, as is the doctrine of the hypostatic union—that Christ was and is both fully human and fully divine, yet one person.

**The Samaritans (8:14–20).** The Samaritan “Pentecost” demonstrates that one may be a believer and yet not have a charismatic-type of spiritual experience. The following observations show that the Samaritans were genuine followers of Jesus prior to the visit of Peter and John: (1) Philip clearly proclaimed to them the good news of the gospel (verse 5); (2) they believed and were baptized (verses 12,16); (3) they had “accepted [*dechomai*] the word of God” (verse 14), an expression synonymous with conversion (Acts 11:1; 17:11; see also 2:41); (4) the laying on of hands by Peter and John was for them to “receive the Holy Spirit” (verse 17), a practice the New Testament never associates with receiving salvation; and (5) the Samaritans, subsequent to their conversion, had an observable and dramatic experience of the Spirit (verse 18).

**Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:17).** The experience of Saul of Tarsus also demonstrates that being filled with the Holy Spirit is an identifiable experience beyond the Spirit’s work in regeneration. Three days after his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1–19), he was visited by Ananias. The following observations are important: (1) Ananias addressed him as “Brother Saul,” which probably indicates a mutually fraternal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) Ananias did not call on Saul to repent and believe, though he did encourage him to be baptized (Acts 22:16); (3) Ananias laid his hands on Saul for both healing and being filled with the Spirit; and (4) There was a time span of three days between Saul’s conversion and his being filled with the Spirit.

**Household of Cornelius at Caesarea (Acts 10:44–48).** The narrative about Cornelius reaches its climax with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon him and his household. He was not a Christian prior to Peter’s visit; he was a God-fearer—a Gentile who had forsaken paganism and embraced important aspects of Judaism without becoming a proselyte, that is, a full-fledged Jew. Apparently Cornelius’s household believed and were regenerated at the moment Peter spoke of Jesus as the one through whom “everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (verse 43). Simultaneously, it seems, they experienced an outpouring of the Spirit like the one on the Day of Pentecost, as Peter later told the leadership of the church in Jerusalem (11:17; 15:8,9). The expressions used to describe that experience do not occur elsewhere in Acts to describe conversion: “the Holy Spirit fell upon” (10:44; cf. 8:16 [both references NASB Updated]); “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (10:45; 11:17; cf. 8:20); “poured out on” (10:45); “baptized with [*en*] the Holy Spirit” (11:16).

The Spirit baptism of the new believers in Caesarea parallels that of believers in Jerusalem (Acts 2), Samaria (Acts 8), and Damascus (Acts 9). But unlike the experience of their predecessors, they had a unified experience whereby their conversion and their baptism in the Spirit occurred in rapid succession.

**The Disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7).** At Ephesus, Paul encountered a group of disciples who had not experienced the baptism in the Spirit. This incident raises three important questions:

(1) Were these men disciples of Jesus or disciples of John the Baptist? Throughout the Book of Acts, every other occurrence of the word “disciple” (*mathētēs*), with one exception,<sup>7</sup> refers to a follower of Jesus. Luke’s reason for calling these men “some disciples” is that he was not sure of the exact number—“about twelve men in all”

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<sup>7</sup> Acts 9:25, where the phrase “his disciples” (NASB Updated) refers to followers of Paul. NIV reads “his followers.”

(verse 7). They were Christian believers in need of teaching; like Apollos (Acts 18:24–27), they needed to have “the way of God” explained “more adequately” (18:26).

(2) What did Paul mean by the question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit, having believed?” (a strict translation of verse 2).<sup>8</sup> He sensed among them a spiritual lack, but did not question the validity of their belief in Jesus. Since in the Book of Acts the clause “to receive the Holy Spirit” refers to Spirit baptism<sup>9</sup> (8:15,17,19; 10:47; see also 2:38), Paul is asking if they have had the experience of the Holy Spirit coming upon them in a charismatic way, as did indeed happen to them subsequently (verse 6).

(3) Does Paul agree with Luke that there is a work of the Spirit for believers that is distinguishable from the Spirit’s work in salvation? This incident at Ephesus, as well as Paul’s own experience (Acts 9:17), requires an affirmative answer.

### Summary Statements

1. In three of the five instances—Samaria, Damascus, Ephesus—persons who had an identifiable experience of the Spirit were already believers. At Caesarea, that experience was almost simultaneous with the saving faith of Cornelius and his household. In Jerusalem, the recipients were already believers in Christ even though it may be difficult—if it is even necessary—to determine with certainty the point in time when they were regenerated in the New Testament sense.
2. In three accounts there was a time-lapse between conversion and Spirit baptism (Samaria, Damascus, Ephesus). The waiting interval for the Jerusalem outpouring was necessary in order for the typological significance of the Day of Pentecost to be fulfilled. In the case of Caesarea, there was no distinguishable time lapse.
3. A variety of interchangeable terminology is used for the experience of Spirit baptism.
4. Groups (Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, Ephesus) as well as an individual (Paul) received the experience.
5. The imposition of hands is mentioned in three instances (Samaria, Damascus, Ephesus) but it is not a requirement, as evidenced by the outpourings in Jerusalem and Caesarea.
6. Even though Spirit baptism is a gift of God’s grace, it should not be called “a second work of grace” or “a second blessing.” Such language implies that a believer can have no experience or experiences of divine grace between conversion and Spirit baptism.
7. The ideal and biblically correct view is that a time-gap between regeneration and Spirit baptism is not a requirement. The emphasis should be on theological, not temporal, subsequence and separability.

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<sup>8</sup> For “having believed [*pisteusantes*],” Greek grammar allows for a translation either of “when you believed” (coincident time) or “after you believed” (antecedent time). Context favors the latter.

<sup>9</sup> In John’s Gospel, of course, the resurrected Jesus did address the disciples with the imperative, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (20:22). Biblical scholars understand John’s usage variously, some seeing it as the immediately realized gift of the Spirit in regeneration, others as anticipation of the Pentecost event, and still others as an independent Johannine report of Pentecost.

## SPEAKING IN TONGUES

### Spirit-Inspired Utterances Prior to Acts 2

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit manifested himself in a variety of ways, but His most characteristic and most frequent work and ministry was that of giving inspired utterance. In addition to prophetic writings, there were many instances when people prophesied orally at the Spirit's prompting—for example, Numbers 11:25–26; 24:2,3; 1 Samuel 10:6,10; 19:20–21. This inspiration to prophesy is the link that connects Old Testament oracular utterances with Joel's prediction that one day all God's people would prophesy (Joel 2:28,29) and with Moses' intense desire—he himself being a prophet—that all God's people might prophesy (Numbers 11:29).

A vital connection exists between Old Testament people prophesying and comparable experiences of New Testament people prior to the Day of Pentecost, especially as recorded in Luke 1–4. In those chapters Luke records that certain people were filled with the Spirit—John the Baptist, his mother Elizabeth, and his father Zechariah—and also that a number of people prophesied under the influence of the Holy Spirit—Elizabeth, Zechariah, Mary, and Simeon. In addition, mention is made of Anna, a prophetess (2:36).

### Evidential Tongues in Acts

**The Day of Pentecost (2:1–21).** Three dramatic phenomena occurred: a violent wind, fire, and speaking in tongues.<sup>10</sup> The wind and the fire, which in Scripture are symbols of the Holy Spirit, *preceded* the outpouring of the Spirit; but the phenomenon of speaking in tongues was an integral part of the disciples' experience of Spirit baptism. The impetus for speaking in tongues was the Holy Spirit. The Greek verb *apophthengomai* at the end of verse 4 occurs again in verse 14 to introduce Peter's speech to the crowd. It is an unusual and infrequently used word, and may be translated "to give inspired utterance."

The Greek verb phrase for speaking in tongues (*lalein glōssais*) does not appear in nonbiblical literature as a technical term for speaking a language one does not know. But it is used by both Luke (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6) and Paul (1 Corinthians 12:30; 13:1; 14:5,6,18,23,39) with that meaning.

The Greek word *glōssa* means the tongue as the organ of speech and, by extension, the product of speech—language. In Acts 2, the languages spoken by the disciples were unknown to them but were understood by others. They were human, identifiable languages. Luke says that the disciples spoke in *other* tongues—that is, languages not their own. However, in the other occurrences in Acts where speaking in tongues is mentioned (10:46; 19:6), there is no indication the languages were understood or identified. Paul's writings imply that Spirit-inspired languages may not always be human, but may be spiritual, heavenly, or angelic (1 Corinthians 13:1; 14:2,14) as a means of communication between a believer and God.

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<sup>10</sup> The English technical term for speaking in tongues is "glossolalia," from the Greek words *glōssa* (tongue, language) and *lalia* (speech). The word does not occur in Scripture.

Two very important observations are in order:

(1) On the Day of Pentecost, *all* who were filled with the Spirit spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4).

(2) Peter, in explaining to the crowd the meaning of the disciples' experience, said it was in fulfillment of Joel 2:28,29 (Acts 2:16–21). Especially significant is that Peter, in the middle of quoting Joel, inserted the words “and they will prophesy” (verse 18c), stressing prophetic utterance as a key feature of the fulfillment. But is speaking in tongues the same as prophesying? Both oral prophesying and speaking in tongues occur when the Holy Spirit comes upon someone and prompts the person to speak. The basic difference is that prophesying is in the speaker's own language, whereas speaking in tongues is in a language unknown to the speaker. But the mode of operation for the two gifts is the same. Speaking in tongues may therefore be considered a specialized or variant form of prophesying as to the manner in which it functions.

**The Samaritans (8:14–20).** The Samaritans had witnessed signs performed by Philip, had responded in faith to the message about Christ, and had submitted to baptism. But they had not yet received the Holy Spirit (verse 15). “Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (verse 17). Simon the sorcerer found something so extraordinary in this gift of the Spirit that he immediately wanted the authority to impart the gift himself. He had already witnessed demon expulsions and healings, but this was markedly different. Luke simply says that Simon “saw” or witnessed that the Spirit was given; something observable took place. The consensus among biblical scholars, many of whom are not Pentecostal or charismatic, is that the Samaritans had a glossolalic experience.

This account falls between the two major narratives in chapters 2 and 10 that unambiguously associate glossolalia with Spirit baptism. Therefore this incident may rightly be called “The Samaritan Pentecost.”

**Saul of Tarsus (9:17).** Luke does not record any details of Paul's Spirit baptism. We do know, however, that Paul spoke in tongues regularly and often (1 Corinthians 14:18). It seems legitimate and logical to infer that he first spoke in tongues at the time Ananias laid hands on him. As with the Samaria account, this narrative comes between the two incidents that clearly say *all* spoke in tongues when they were baptized in the Spirit.

**The Household of Cornelius at Caesarea (Acts 10:44–48).** Several observations are important:

(1) Peter clearly identified the experience of Cornelius's household with that of the Pentecost disciples: “God gave them the same gift as he gave us” (Acts 11:17; see also 15:8). In addition, common terms like “baptized with [en] the Holy Spirit,” “poured out,” and “gift” appear in both accounts.

(2) The outward, observable manifestation of glossolalia convinced Peter's Jewish-Christian companions that the Spirit had indeed fallen on these Gentiles: “*For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God*” (verse 46, italics added for emphasis).



(3) Very likely, the phrase “praising [*megalunō*]<sup>11</sup> God” is a commentary on the content of the glossolalia. Acts 2:11 is relevant, which identifies the content of the glossolalia on Pentecost as a recital of “the wonders [*megaleia*] of God.”

(4) *All* the recipients spoke in tongues (verse 44). This incident and the Pentecost incident which also says that *all* spoke in tongues indisputably and unambiguously connect glossolalia with the baptism in the Spirit. The two narratives bracket the two in chapters 8 and 9 where Luke did not give details about the believers’ Spirit experience.

**The Disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7).** When the Holy Spirit came upon these disciples, “they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (verse 6). The Greek text may be translated: “Not only [*te*] did they speak in tongues, but they also [*kai*] prophesied.”<sup>12</sup>

### Summary Statements

1. Throughout the Old Testament, the early chapters of Luke’s Gospel and the Book of Acts, there is a pattern of inspired speech when the Holy Spirit comes upon people.
2. The outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is the model, or paradigm, for later outpourings.
3. Speaking in tongues, as to the manner in which it occurs, may be regarded as a specialized or variant form of prophecy.
4. Speaking in tongues was an integral part of Spirit baptism in the Book of Acts. It is the only manifestation associated with Spirit baptism which is explicitly presented as evidence authenticating the experience, and on that basis should be considered normative.
5. The Pentecostal doctrine of “the initial, physical evidence” of speaking in tongues is an attempt to encapsulate the thought that at the time of Spirit baptism the believer will speak in tongues. It conveys the idea that speaking in tongues is the initial, empirical accompaniment to Spirit baptism. Nowhere does the Scripture indicate that one may be baptized in the Spirit without speaking in tongues.
6. First Corinthians 12:30 is sometimes elicited as evidence that tongues are not a necessary component of Spirit baptism since Paul asks, “Not all speak in tongues, do they?”<sup>13</sup> But both the broad context and the immediate context relate the question to the exercise of the gift in corporate worship, as noted by the question immediately following: “Not all interpret, do they?” According to 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, only some believers are prompted by the Holy Spirit to give an utterance in tongues in a gathering of God’s people.

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<sup>11</sup> See Luke 1:46 and Acts 19:17 for parallel occurrences.

<sup>12</sup> The Greek construction is *te . . . kai* which, along with *te kai*, is common in the Book of Acts. The following are possible translations: “as . . . so; not only . . . but also.” Some grammatical examples are in Acts 1:1,8; 4:27; 8:12; 9:2; 22:4; 26:3. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.). Revised and edited by Frederick William Danker. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 993.

<sup>13</sup> A strict translation, based on the Greek form of the seven questions in this verse.

## PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF SPIRIT BAPTISM

### Continuing Evidences of Spirit Baptism

Divinely-intended results of Spirit baptism include:

***Speaking in Tongues.*** Speaking in tongues is the initial, empirical indication that the infilling has taken place but it also benefits the speaker spiritually, for Paul says that “anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God” and that “he who speaks in a tongue edifies himself” (1 Corinthians 14:2,4). This is the devotional aspect of tongues, which is associated with praising God and giving Him thanks (verses 16,17). This aspect is sometimes called a prayer language. It is an element in praying in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20). Because it is a means by which believers edify themselves spiritually, tongues may be called a means of grace. It is not an experience that occurs only at the time of being baptized in the Spirit; it ought to be a continual, repeated experience. This is implied in Paul’s statement to the Corinthians: “I wish all of you to continue speaking in tongues” (1 Corinthians 14:5, a strict translation reflecting the Greek verb tense).

In addition, some qualified exegetes understand Paul to mean praying in tongues, or at least to include it, when he says that “the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26).

***Openness to Spiritual Manifestations.*** Spirit baptism opens up the receiver to the full range of spiritual gifts. This is a natural consequence of having already submitted to something supernatural and suprarational by allowing oneself to be overwhelmed by the Spirit. But this does not rule out spiritual gifts among those not Spirit filled. Both the Old Testament and the Gospels show that most of the gifts occurred prior to the Day of Pentecost, yet it was not until after the outpouring of the Spirit on that day that there occurred among God's people a much higher incidence and a broader range of spiritual gifts. Since the edification of God's people is the overarching purpose of spiritual gifts in the assembly (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:3–6,12), Spirit-filled believers should desire them earnestly (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1).

***Righteous Living.*** Spirit baptism has implications for righteous living. Number 7 of the Assemblies of God “Statement of Fundamental Truths” states that with the baptism in the Spirit “comes the endowment of power for life and service.” The phrase “for life” means “for righteous living.” If, indeed, Spirit baptism is an immersion in the One who is the *Holy Spirit*—the most frequent New Testament designation for Him—the experience must in some way relate to personal holiness. A basic problem with some believers in the Corinthian congregation was that they continued to speak in tongues without allowing the Spirit to work internally in their lives. It is at this point that the Spirit-baptized need to understand that spiritual fruit, and not only spiritual gifts, should issue from the Pentecostal experience.

Spirit baptism does not produce instant sanctification (nothing does!), but it gives the recipient an added impetus to pursue a life pleasing to God. In this connection, it is important to see the link between being continually filled with the Spirit and its consequences in the believer’s life—a joyful spirit, ministry to others, thanksgiving, mutual submission and mutual respect (Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9).

The baptism in the Spirit must not be a one-time experience. In addition to the Spirit's daily internal work in one's life, there are occasions when He comes upon believers in times of crisis or to meet a special need; those times are also designated as being "filled with the Spirit" (Acts 4:8,31; 13:9,52).

**Power for Witnessing.** The association of power with the Holy Spirit is common in the New Testament, and sometimes the two terms are interchangeable (for example, Luke 1:35; 4:14; Acts 10:38; Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5). The ascended Jesus told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). In Acts, He tells them "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses" (1:8). These themes of Spirit baptism and world evangelization are closely related emphases in the Book of Acts. A cause-effect relationship between the two is obvious, but Jesus did not say that world evangelization was the *sole* purpose of the power. The Spirit's work in Spirit baptism must be understood in a wider context than that which Acts emphasizes, yet a Spirit-baptized person who does not bear witness to Christ is a contradiction in terms.

Both from a biblical standpoint and from a missionary/evangelistic standpoint, receiving this power must be understood to include the proclamation of the gospel. The proclamation is primarily verbal, but the power Jesus promised included the performance of miracles in His name. The Book of Acts records evidences of the Spirit's work—vocal gifts, healings, exorcisms, raisings from the dead, etc.—which the Lord used in preparing an audience for the proclamation of the gospel.

### **Encouragement for Those Not Yet Baptized**

The Scriptures do not give a formula for receiving the initial infilling of the Spirit, but the following considerations will be helpful:

**All Believers Are Candidates.** Joel predicted that the Lord would pour out His Spirit upon all His people (2:28–29). Old and young, male and female, servants—no distinction as to age, gender, or social status—are included in the promise. This echoes the fervent hope (and prophecy!) of Moses that the Lord would put His Spirit upon all His people (Numbers 11:29). Prophetic endowment would no longer be limited to a select few. Peter underscored this theme in his Pentecost speech when he quoted the Joel passage and then declared that the promised gift of the Spirit was "for you [Jews] and your children [descendants] and for all who are far off" (verses 38,39). "Far off" probably means the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:13,17); some interpret it to mean those who are distant chronologically and geographically. Interested believers must be assured and convinced that the experience is indeed for them.

**The Spirit Already Indwells All Believers.** It is important to stress that the Holy Spirit is not external to a believer not yet baptized in the Spirit. The Spirit works internally in a repentant and believing person to effect the new birth; He does not then depart, to come back at the time of the infilling. Spirit-baptism is an overwhelming experience of the already indwelling Spirit; it is called by some a "release" of the Spirit.

***Baptism in the Spirit Is a Gift.*** By definition, a gift is not earned. If it were on the basis of a person's merit, the unanswerable question would be, "What should be the extent of the person's worthiness?" Or, "How 'perfect' must one be before qualifying for the experience?" It is possible for a sincere seeker to be so preoccupied with a sense of personal unworthiness that the Spirit cannot flow freely through that person.

***God Will Not Permit Sincere Seekers to Have a Counterfeit Experience.*** Some are fearful that their "speaking in tongues" will be either self-generated or that it will be prompted by Satan. Such persons need to be assured of Jesus' words, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" This is in a context that says even an earthly father will not permit a requested fish to be substituted by a snake or a requested egg to be substituted by a scorpion (Luke 11:11–13).

***Expectancy and Openness Facilitate Reception.*** Candidates must be willing to yield to whatever the Lord prompts them to do. While genuine speaking in tongues cannot be self-generated, the seeker must cooperate with, or be borne along by, the Holy Spirit and to give vocal expression to an inner prompting to utter unfamiliar sounds. The experience of the disciples on the Day of Pentecost is instructive; they spoke in tongues "as the Spirit was giving them utterance" (Acts 2:4, NASB Updated).

***Prayer and Praise Often Lead into the Experience.*** Jesus' teaching on the Father's disposition to give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him (Luke 11:13) follows an extended passage on prayer (verses 1–12) in which He elaborates on and illustrates the aspect of persistence. The Greek verbs for "ask," "seek," and "knock" are in the Greek present tense, suggesting the thought of "keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking." This should be distinguished from begging in desperation and frustration; it is more the idea of the beatitude, "Blessed are those who keep hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6, a strict translation). It should be noted that prior to the Day of Pentecost, the disciples were "all joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:14).

Petition should be combined with praise. The Upper Room praying was complemented by the disciples staying "continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:53). Spirit baptism seekers should be engaged in praise as well as in petition, since praising God in one's own language often facilitates the transition to praising Him in tongues. It is notable that the content of the Pentecost disciples' utterances was praise for the mighty works of God (Acts 2:11; note also 10:46). This is especially interesting since the Jewish celebration of Pentecost, a harvest festival, was a time of joy and thanksgiving to God. Even on a personal basis, an individual offering to God the firstfruits of the grain harvest engaged in a recital of God's mighty act of delivering Israel from Egyptian slavery (Deuteronomy 26:1–11).

***Special Blessings May Occur Along the Way.*** The baptism in the Spirit is attested by speaking in tongues, but one may have other valid and meaningful spiritual experiences between regeneration and Spirit baptism. Sometimes these blessings are a foreshadowing or taste of the climactic experience, serving to prepare for and facilitate the receiving of the Spirit's fullness, but they should not be identified as Spirit baptism itself.

***God's Timing May Differ from Ours.*** The Lord responds to believing prayer and praise, but for reasons best known to himself, His timing may not coincide with our wishes. Both in Scripture and in church history, outpourings of the Spirit sometimes occurred in unexpected places and at unexpected times. Consequently, seekers should not be discouraged or get under self-condemnation if the infilling of the Spirit does not take place when they expect. But during times of special spiritual visitation when others are being filled with the Spirit, conditions are optimum for the seeker.

### **CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

Baptism in the Holy Spirit must be more than a safeguarded and cherished doctrine; it must be a vital, productive and ongoing experience in the life of believers and their personal relationship with the Lord, their interaction with other believers, and their witness to the world. The vitality and vibrancy of the Church can be realized only when believers personally and corporately manifest the power of the Holy Spirit that was experienced by Jesus himself and that He promised to His followers.

### **APPENDIX**

The official doctrinal statements of the Assemblies of God regarding baptism in the Holy Spirit are found in the *Statement of Fundamental Truths* and are as follows:

#### **7. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian church. With it come the enduement of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 1 Corinthians 12:1–31). This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 8:12–17; 10:44–46; 11:14–16; 15:7–9). With the baptism in the Holy Spirit come such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37–39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence for God (Acts 2:43; Hebrews 12:28), an intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word, and for the lost (Mark 16:20).

#### **8. The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

The baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4–10,28), but different in purpose and use.