

Baptism And the Holy Spirit

by Stella Paterson

The topic of "baptism" and how it relates to the Holy Spirit is of utmost importance, especially in these last days. Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming back for a bride without spot or wrinkle. But can we rid ourselves of those spots and wrinkles? No--never! Some folks say that in order to be fit for eternity with Christ, we must be baptized in water. But is that not a *work* performed by man? What does the bible tell us? What has the Holy Spirit of Truth taught?

According to James Strong, the word "baptize" means "*makewhelmed*." ¹ The Greek dictionary shows no definition for "whelmed," but Webster's dictionary shows two words merged to make the word "*whelm*." Those two words mean "to overwhelm" and "to cover," so the resulting definition of *whelm* is "*to submerge, cover, or engulf*." ² Thayer's Greek dictionary shows that the word "baptize" also means "*to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe*."

There are two types of baptism mentioned in the bible: the ceremonial baptism in water and the baptism by the Holy Spirit. Water baptism is widely used by many denominational and non-denominational groups. Whether this baptism should be by sprinkling or by total immersion is controversial. But that is not the issue here. We must get back to the true meaning of *baptism* according to the bible.

The ritual of water baptism is intended to signify the death and burial of flesh and the rising to new life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Do we fail to comprehend the profound significance and symbolism attached to water baptism by immersion? For the most part, baptism in water has become so ritualistic that the true message is lost. Have we overlooked the fact that the Holy Spirit's function, aside from giving life to a new creature in Christ, and teaching us, is to begin the process of "making clean"? That being said, let's look at how *baptism* was introduced.

Purification

In Leviticus, the LORD God said, "*For I am the LORD your God: you shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and **you shall be holy; for I am holy***." (Leviticus 11:44) Back then, during the time of Moses' Law, there was no power to be holy; it had to be done through obedience to the Law, which was done in the strength of *self*. That same Law foretold of the coming Messiah Who would become *Holiness* to man.

In Isaiah 64:1, the prophet expresses his heart cry with these words: "*Oh that you would rend the heavens, that you would come down, that the mountains might flow down at your presence.*" He had prophesied earlier, saying "*The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*" (Isaiah 40:3) Of course, we know he was speaking of John the Baptist who was to come.

Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled, as we see in Matthew's words:

For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "A voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.' (Matthew 3:3 EMTV)

How did John prepare the way of the Lord? He captured their attention through a prophetic act which we know as "baptism." How was it prophetic? It prepared the people for the One who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire, as we learn from Luke's record of Jesus' life on earth.

*John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; **but** One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire**; whose winnowing shovel is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and will gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire."* (Luke 3:16-17 EMTV)

John the Baptist introduced Jesus, the One Who had "existed before him," saying, "***I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.***" John told how he "*saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.*" John recognized Him because he had heard the words, "*Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.*"³ **John came baptizing with water so that Jesus should be revealed to Israel--**Jesus, the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' baptism by John was to show Israel this One who came to die so that He might give His Spirit to be the *Baptizer*. Israel had been given the Law of Moses by which to live, in acknowledgement of God as the "*LORD God*" and to reveal their sinfulness. ⁴ The Gospel (good message) of Jesus Christ was given so they might no longer be bound to the Law, but be freed by God's Spirit. They could now be washed clean by the Spirit's presence and become alive unto God instead of dead in sin.

We have here an example of an important, God-ordained event being revealed to one of His prophets. That *event* would be the coming of the Holy Spirit. And what a grand entrance He made! As Jesus was being baptized by John, He came up out of the water and upon Him descended the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

This had earlier been shown to John so he would have the confirmation that he had indeed heard from God regarding the baptism Jesus would perform.

But first of all, Isaiah prophesied of John; then Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all confirmed the words of the prophet in their accounts of Jesus' life. But none can compare to the words of Jesus Himself, as found in Luke's gospel.

I came to cast fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is completed! (Luke 12:49-50 EMTV)

Jesus was not speaking of His "need" to be baptized by John. He was speaking of the urgent need for His Spirit to begin His work in the people. I cannot help but think Jesus may have been referring to His death on the Cross, His resurrection and ascension, and His sending the Spirit to be our Life.

Jesus' baptism by John was only a part of God's plan to introduce the Holy Spirit in a way the people could understand. If He had not been introduced through a simple example of immersion in water, which the people used for cleansing, the Spirit would not have been fully seen as the Purifier.

Modern-day baptism

For centuries, and even today, there are those who believe a "sprinkling" with water, which they call "baptism," makes a person fit for eternity with Jesus. There are also those who legalistically adhere to immersion, believing this can add to the work Jesus accomplished on the Cross. At the same time, there are many who desire to be baptized as a testimony of their having buried the flesh and been raised by the Spirit. For these faithful believers in Jesus, such an act is a celebration of death to self. Because of their love for the Lord it is a precious experience, and for many it can be an emotional time as the Spirit of God ministers to them. Is it their obedience to water baptism that matters? Or, is it their willingness to die to self in the power of the Holy Spirit? I believe it is the latter, for water can never do what the Spirit of God came to do.

Having said all that, we need to look at some additional passages where baptism is spoken about.

Baptism of John and Holy Spirit Baptism

Baptism in water was typically referred to as the "*baptism of John*," as was mentioned in 6 different verses. When reference is made to John's "baptism" we must keep in mind the little word "but" which precedes the statement that Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire. This is brought out in a passage in Acts:

*Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who, coming down, prayed concerning them in order that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For **He had not yet fallen upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of Christ Jesus.** (Acts 8:14-16 EMTV)*

When the word "baptize" is used it does not always refer to water baptism. One example where it is obvious the meaning was *Holy Spirit baptism* is found in this passage, also from Acts:

*And Ananias departed and entered the house; and putting his hands on him, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, the One who appeared to you in the way which you were coming, so that you may see again and **be filled with the Holy Spirit.**" And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he saw again; and arising, he was baptized, and when he received food, he was strengthened. Now Saul was with the disciples in Damascus three days. (Acts 9:17-19 EMTV)*

Only with the Spirit's power, received through the Spirit's baptism, could Paul then fulfil the call of God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, which can be seen in the ensuing verses of Acts 9.

In this next passage, we see how the Holy Spirit makes us clean. Peter had been told by the Lord that he was not to call anything "common" that He had made clean through the power of His Spirit. The Lord was speaking of the Gentiles. And those "of the circumcision" were challenging Peter over his spending time with Gentiles. In the verses where Peter explains to those questioning him, he also says this:

*"And when I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as also on us in the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, **but** you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God has given to them the same gift as He gave to us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to be able to hinder God?" (Acts 11:15-17 EMTV)*

Baptized into

These words from Paul the Apostle do not necessarily speak of either baptism. To be "baptized into" has its own meaning, which has nothing to do with "baptism" as we know it. Take a look at what Paul says:

*We died to sin--How shall we live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?** Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of*

the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:2b-4 EMTV)

To give a little better idea how the term "baptize into" is used, we now look at Paul's words to the Corinthians:

*Now I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were **baptized into Moses** in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they were drinking from that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4 EMTV)*

Again we see Paul using that same phrase.

*For by **one Spirit we were all baptized into one body**--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and we were all given to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13 EMTV)*

As Paul tells us, without the Spirit's presence in us, we are not Christ's. As he put it in Romans 8:9, "*But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*" We must also include this verse: "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" (Galatians 3:27 EMTV)

Speaking in tongues

The baptism of the Holy Spirit has been given a much different meaning. There is one sign in particular that is looked for, which is "speaking in tongues." Even though it means "*fiftieth*"⁵ (day after Passover), the word "*Pentecost*" has been adopted from the book of Acts and made into a denomination. There is a lesson in *Passover before Pentecost*. It is this: We can only receive Pentecost if we have first come by way of Passover--the Cross.

Sadly, in some circles, the use of tongues is cherished as a sign of *having arrived*. But where is the teaching on the fruit of the Spirit? The fruit should be of far greater significance than the evidence of tongues. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 that speaking in tongues is nothing but a jangling noise if we have no love. A believer who has been baptized by the Holy Spirit will unconsciously emanate the *fruit of the Spirit*--and it begins with love.

For one who is freed from his flesh and full of the Holy Spirit, the unknown language (tongues) is a precious gift to be utilized in times of prayer. It is a language only God and His Spirit can understand. There is no demon in hell that can comprehend the language of the Holy Spirit and attempt to interfere in an

answer to prayer. The Holy Spirit, through the unknown language, makes intercession **for** the saints according to the Father's will. ⁶

The Apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians that there are tongues and interpretations of tongues, as well as guidelines for their proper operation in a group setting. ⁷ But that is another topic. The focus here is on the primary work of the Holy Spirit to be Life from God in one who is truly born from above. It is a work of God's Spirit when He comes to dwell in a surrendered vessel, renovating (regenerating) His new abode. **His purpose is to purify us from *all* the flesh life, and to be the Power living through us.**

In his letter to Titus, Paul said, "*But when the kindness of God our Savior, and His love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy **he saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.***" (Titus 3:4-5)

No works of righteousness done in our own strength can begin to compare to the work of God's Spirit. **We cannot duplicate fruit of the Spirit in our lives. No counterfeit fruit could ever please God or touch the lives of others as effectively as the real thing--we *need* God's Holy Spirit.**

Paul, in his wonderful admonition to the Church, cautioned us to be careful how we walk, not being foolish in these evil days. "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*" ⁸ It is more desirable to be full of the Spirit than to be intoxicated with wine. A young friend said to me one time, "There is no high like the Most High."

Why another tongue?

Before Jesus ascended to the Father in Heaven, He charged His apostles to wait in Jerusalem to be baptized with the Holy Spirit as the Father had promised. They asked Him if this is the time when He would restore the kingdom to Israel. But He told them it was not for them to know times or seasons that only the Father knows. Then He said to them, "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses **to Me** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8 NKJV)

Only when they had been filled with the Holy Spirit could they be witnesses to Him, because the Holy Spirit was the Power within Who would minister through them and point others to Jesus. Yes, there were other tongues as Acts 2:4 tells us, but look at the reason: They were in Jerusalem; it was fifty days after Passover, and Jesus had ascended to the Father. His Spirit came from Heaven with a sound like a rushing, mighty wind filling the room with His presence. The people saw upon each other what appeared to be tongues of fire, and all were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. When the Jews

from other nations heard those full of the Spirit speaking in their languages, they were amazed and said, "**Are not all these who are talking Galileans? Then how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own (particular) dialect to which we were born?**" (Acts 2:7b-8 Amplified)

Only the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, speaking through those who were filled, could get the attention of the devout Jews who had been steeped all their lives in the legalism of Moses' Law. Peter could have preached in his own strength with full understanding of the truth, but without this work of the Holy Spirit, the true Church never would have been born. And today, without the work of the Holy Spirit no preacher will be effective.

Paul spoke the simple truth when he wrote that the mind of the flesh is enmity [Greek: *hostility*] ⁹ against God. **If we are in the flesh we cannot please God.** But if the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. "**But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.**" (Romans 8:9b) Here, we see the difference between death and Life. The flesh produces dead works, while the work of the Spirit yields fruit.

Filled with the Holy Spirit

Why do we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit? The simple truth can be seen, when we consider whether we can be filled with *self* and still be effective disciples of Jesus. In reality, this is the bottom line when it comes to the central message in the bible. But do the bible-reading people even get the message?

It borders almost on blasphemy, the way "Holy Spirit Baptism" has been so irreverently tossed about on the lips of modern-day Christians. Jesus paid the supreme price so that we might have Life. It was by the Spirit that He was raised from the dead, and it is only by the Spirit that we can escape the death that comes with the filth of flesh and *self*. All the while, "speaking in tongues" has even become the password, so to speak, to gain entry into the "Pentecostalism club." As was stated earlier, "*fruit should be of far greater significance than the evidence of tongues.*"

In his message to the Ephesians, where Paul was exhorting them to be prepared as the Bride of Christ, and to model that relationship in marriage, he charged them to be "filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18b) If the Bride is to be without spot or wrinkle, only the Holy Spirit's fullness in us can make us fit. We cannot be part *self* and part Spirit. We must surrender ALL that we are.

[Click here](#) for the New Testament study of the word "Baptize."

1. Greek #907
2. Webster's New World Dictionary - Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986
3. John 1:30-33 NKJV
4. Chapter 5

5. Greek #4005
6. Romans 8:27
7. 1 Corinthians 14
8. Ephesians 5:15-20
9. Greek #2189