

WHAT ABOUT SPIRIT BAPTISM ?

We're exploring four baptisms in Luke 3:1-22. John's baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins, a washing in water, pictured God's cleansing from sin. Jesus underwent John's baptism, not to repent but to *"fulfill all righteousness."* Christ perfectly obeyed all of God's commands as the perfect sinless sacrifice who forgives sins, in a picture of divine saving grace. Believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are expected to be baptized, as an outward responsibility and demonstration of their faith in Him. But "Spirit baptism" is the inward spiritual reality that underlies the outward physical picture of water baptism.

1- GOD Promised His Holy Spirit. The Old Testament makes many New Covenant promises. When Moses gave the people God's Law, in Deuteronomy 30 God also promised them He would *"circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."* The outward sign of circumcision identified them as God's set-apart people. But without an inward circumcision of the heart, they could never keep God's Laws.

In Ezekiel 36 God said, *"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you."* Not only new hearts but also, *"I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes."* In Jeremiah 31 God said, *"I will put My Law within them, and write it on their hearts."* This was all part of the promised New Covenant, which Christ Jesus came to fulfill, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

2- THE SPIRIT Baptizes Believers Into Christ. John made it clear: *"I baptize you with water, but He who is mightier than I is coming. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."* God had told John *"He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."* This happened at Jesus' baptism. Colin Smith observes, "John's water baptism expresses the people's desire for new life, but Jesus' Spirit baptism gives them the power to live this new life, as only Jesus can give the Holy Spirit."

At His ascension in Acts 1, Jesus again promised the Holy Spirit. The unique Holy Spirit experience of the Jewish disciples in Acts 2 and the Gentiles in Acts 8-11 is not normative, but narrative, because it describes the unique formation of the church in the New Covenant Age. An outward display of the Holy Spirit at baptism is not mentioned in Scripture past Acts 11, and believers today do not expect it. Why?

3- ALL BELIEVERS Are Baptized With The Holy Spirit. 1Corinthians 12:13 says, *"for in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit."* All believers have this in common. This is the baptizing with and of and in and by the Holy Spirit. Titus 3 explains, *"when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior."*

God regenerates sinful mankind by the baptizing of the Holy Spirit, given through Jesus Christ. He said *"you must be born again from above by the Spirit."* John 1:12-13 explains, *"to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."* This is the new birth, regeneration, being "born again from above by the Spirit," by which one becomes a Christian, by God's grace.

4- WATER Baptism Pictures SPIRIT baptism. In the Old Testament, circumcision was the sign of God's covenant, the cutting of the male flesh to demonstrate how His people were set apart to serve Him. But one could be circumcised and not love God with their whole heart, mind, and will. This would happen only with the coming of the Holy Spirit within His people, in the New Covenant. The cleansing pictures of water and fire are associated with the Holy Spirit, who comes to God's people not when they are baptized in water, but when baptized by the Spirit of God, the moment of salvation. Spirit baptism, the washing of regeneration, is the reality behind the powerful picture of the New Covenant sign of water baptism.

Colossians 2:11 says about receiving Christ, *"in Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith... and you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him."* God's promises in the Old Covenant come to pass through Christ Jesus in the New Covenant, by the Spirit. And baptism is the sign given for all people, male and female, Jew and Gentile, who put their trust in Christ.

5- HAVE YOU Been Baptized By The Holy Spirit? Romans 6 explains how water baptism powerfully pictures Spirit baptism, being born again to new life in Christ, dead to sin and alive to God. But you can wear a wedding ring, and not be married. You can be baptized in water, but if you have not been baptized by the Spirit, it is a meaningless ritual, not a means of salvation. Jesus saves. Not baptism, not rituals, not works. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring you to salvation, by grace through faith, repenting, believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If you have trusted Christ, it is because of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And by His life within, He empowers you to live a life of repentance and faith. Live it! ☐