

BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS

is a series of leaflets dealing with controversial issues of the Christian faith where Christians have differed. What the leaflets teach is from the Bible and not relying on any church tradition or human authority. It is for you, it is your responsibility before God, to have a Berean spirit, and search the Scriptures to know the truth (Acts 17:11).

What has been written is from the perspective of the historical Protestant and Reformed Faith as found in the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, which in turn is largely the Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646, and the Congregationalist Savoy Declaration of 1658. These are time honoured views from a wide Christian perspective.

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6. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the great new covenant blessing.

This is why Jesus came! Yes, He came to be born like us, to live a perfect life as the second Adam, to suffer and to die for our sins, to rise and be exalted into heaven. He did all this that He might give those who believe on Him the Holy Spirit. So the Old Testament prophesied – Isaiah 32:15, Ezekiel 36:27, 37:14, 39:29, Joel 2:28. It is the one thing John the Baptist said Jesus had come to do – Matthew 3:11. It is the central gift of the risen Lord to His new covenant people – 2 Corinthians 3:6-8, Galatians 3:14.

7. Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit? Unless you are, you are not a true Christian. Speaking in tongues is NOT the evidence of the baptism. Tongues was a gift only given to some, as the Spirit willed (1 Corinthians 12:11,30). The “more excellent way” (12:31) is the way of love. A person may have tongues of the most exalted nature imaginable (of angels), yet without love it is just a noise (13:1). The fruit of the Spirit is love ... (Galatians 5:22-23).

COMMON QUESTION NO. 3

ARE YOU BAPTIZED WITH THE SPIRIT?

This is a very important question to ask because the very reason why Christ came was to baptize His people with the Holy Spirit; so preached John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 11:16).

1. What is ‘baptism with the Holy Spirit’? Apart from the verses above in the Gospels and Acts there is only one other specific reference to being baptized with the Spirit – 1 Corinthians 12:13. In the Greek language in which Paul wrote the grammatical construction is exactly the same and so should not be translated “in one Spirit” but “with” the Spirit. John the Baptist used water as that into which he baptized repentant sinners; Jesus uses the Spirit as that into which He baptizes all His people. This is the clear parallel. The Spirit is not the One performing the baptism; but Jesus. This is the whole emphasis on the Day of Pentecost, that the exalted Jesus is given the Spirit by the Father and pours Him out (Acts 2:33). Therefore, this ‘baptism’ is the work of the risen Lord immersing a person in the Holy Spirit.

2. All true Christians are baptized with the Holy Spirit. There is an emphasis in 1 Corinthians 12:13 on Christian unity, the word “one” occurring 5 times. There is only one body (the true church), and one Spirit. So this baptism unites all genuine Christians into the church where the gifts are to be used. The teaching that the ‘baptism’ is an experience that only *some* Christians have after conversion is therefore false. That would divide Christians into 2 groups, those who have and those who have not. Note that the word “all” occurs 3 times. It does not matter what kind of Christian you are thinking of, “Jew or Greek, slave or free”, all were baptised, all have drunk of the Spirit. Do not bring objections to this from experience. You may object that some Christians have an experience that others do not have. That may be true, but that experience is not the Biblical one of being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

3. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a conversion experience. This is because all Christians have received the baptism. The word “baptism” is not the only way to describe what the Spirit does at conversion. Baptism emphasizes being fully controlled by the Spirit. See how it is used in Mark 10:38-39 and Luke 12:50 to describe the great sufferings Jesus is to undergo. It is just one way to view the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian.

- Regenerates. It is the Holy Spirit who powerfully works to bring the new birth, to make us new creatures (John 3:5-8). There is far too much emphasis today on what we do in salvation. The fact is that we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual life as by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins.
- Indwells. The Holy Spirit indwells every Christian but not as a passive guest (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Timothy 1:14). He indwells powerfully to sanctify, to teach, to protect. Unless a person is so indwelt he is not a Christian at all. This is why Christians are of the Spirit whereas non-Christians are of the flesh (Romans 8:4-5).
- Seals. The Holy Spirit indwells as a seal (Ephesians 1:13, 4:30), His mark upon us guaranteeing that we shall at last receive the eternal inheritance.

4. Question: Are there not occasions in Acts when Christians received the baptism after conversion? There are 4 supposed times:

- The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). It is wrong to think that this was a second experience for the disciples of Christ after conversion. Before this time they were living under the old covenant. It was impossible for them to receive the promised Holy Spirit until Christ was exalted (see 2:33, John 7:39). The gift of the Spirit marked their entry into the new covenant, so the beginning of their experience as ‘Christians’. Peter says that this is the time they “believed in the Lord Jesus Christ” (11:17). Note that all who repent and are baptized, that is, become Christians because they are called, have the promise of receiving the Spirit (2:38-39).

- The Samaritans (Acts 8:17). It is quite clear that they believed and were baptized but had not received the Holy Spirit (8:12,16). There is something very special here as two apostles from Jerusalem had to come and pray for them to receive the Spirit. Remember there was centuries’ long hatred between Jews and Samaritans (see John 4:9). God deliberately withheld His Spirit until apostles (Jews) were present to guarantee that the Samaritans would be accepted by their Jewish brethren as genuine Christians. We must not take such an occasion and build a doctrine on it. Scripture teaching is clear that anyone who does not have the Spirit does not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9).
- Cornelius and his house (Acts 10:44). There is absolutely no question but that this was a conversion experience. When Peter explains to the brethren in Jerusalem what happened in Cornelius’ house and why he had to baptize them, they interpreted the falling of the Spirit to be the very experience they had at Pentecost, and said that God has granted the Gentiles also repentance unto life (11:18).
- The Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:6). Although these 12 are called “disciples” (19:1), they were clearly disciples of John the Baptist, never having heard that the Holy Spirit had been given. Paul preached to them about faith and repentance (19:4), they were baptized in the name of Jesus, and they received the Holy Spirit (19:5-6). This is conversion!

5. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not the same as being filled with the Spirit. The baptism happens once at conversion. We are never commanded to seek the baptism, but we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:19). Although the disciples were baptized with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the account records that they were “filled” (Acts 2:4), and this was something that could be repeated when there was a special situation (see Acts 4:8,31, 7:55, 13:9, 13:52).