

What Is the Difference between Being Baptized with the Spirit and Being Filled with the Spirit?

Acts 2:1-4

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What is the difference between being baptized with the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit? Or is there a difference? By the grace of God, I hope to demonstrate from Scripture that there is a very clear difference as to the nature and design between **Spirit baptism** and **Spirit filling**. There are professing Christians that will use these two distinct blessings to refer to one and the same blessing (as if they were simply two different expressions of the same blessing). This sadly leads to some significant problems in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit and in applying the work of the Holy Spirit to our practical, every day experience. “Why be so picky? What difference does it really make?” some may ask.

Could you imagine the confusion that would exist in one’s understanding of the divine institution of marriage if people thought that **engagement (betrothal) and marriage** were two different expressions for the same blessing—that would certainly lead to much more premarital sin and many premarital pregnancies.

We see the devastating consequences in doctrine and life when the Church of Rome essentially makes the two distinct blessings of **justification and sanctification** into one blessing—justification then is no longer based upon the righteousness of Christ alone and received by faith alone, but is based upon the merit of Christ **and the changed heart found in man** (upon inward qualifications found in man’s faith, love, and obedience as well).

Thus, not making proper biblical, theological, and practical distinctions

between two biblical blessings (whether between engagement and marriage, between justification and sanctification, or between Spirit baptism and Spirit filling) will inevitably lead to unsound doctrine and confusion in one's practical Christian life. This Lord's Day we shall seek (by God's grace) to make clear the biblical and practical distinction between Spirit baptism and Spirit filling.

The main points from our text this Lord's Day are the following: (1) The Promise of **Spirit Baptism** Is Realized (Acts 2:1-3); and (2) The Power of **Spirit Filling** Is Applied (Acts 2:4).

I. **The Promise of *Spirit Baptism* Is Realized (Acts 2:1-3).**

A. The Lord Jesus had promised His apostles that they would receive not many days from then the promise of the Father, which He further defines as being baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). In a previous sermon we defined and clarified what the baptism with the Holy Spirit is. I will briefly summarize the nature and design of Spirit baptism.

1. Spirit baptism is not a second distinct work of grace from conversion when a sinner turns in faith to Christ, but is one aspect of the glorious salvation that is received when a sinner trusts alone in Christ alone for his/her eternal salvation (Galatians 3:2,14).

2. Spirit baptism is not a repeatable experience in the life of the Christian, but is once and for all received as a free gift from the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Spirit baptism brings the believer into union with the crucified, resurrected and exalted Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and therefore into union with all members of the redeemed Church. Just as water baptism is received only once, so also Spirit baptism is received only once, because water baptism is the outward sign of the promise of Spirit baptism (Matthew 3:11).

3. Spirit baptism is received by all regenerated Christians

(without exception). Notice the use of “all” (without exception) in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Spirit baptism is the blessing above all blessings that Jesus gives to us (“the first fruits” according to Romans 8:23)—for it is the Holy Spirit that applies all the blessings of the New Covenant to all believers.

4. Spirit baptism is a unique blessing of the New Covenant because it was the chief royal blessing poured out upon believers in order to bear witness to the truth that Jesus Christ was raised and exalted to His royal throne (John 7:37-39). Though Old Testament believers received the Holy Spirit in regeneration to work faith in them to believe the gospel and to work within them both to will and to do God’s good pleasure in sanctification, nevertheless, this blessing of Spirit baptism awaited the accomplishment of redemption through Christ for its realization.

5. Spirit baptism was Christ’s blessing in sending the Holy Spirit to be His **Vicar** in acting as Christ’s representative in applying the all the benefits of Christ purchased for us: His teaching, love, fruit of the Spirit, gifts of the Spirit, death, resurrection, exaltation, and mediation of Christ to the life of every redeemed believer (John 14:16).

6. Spirit baptism is not a blessing to be sought separate from salvation—it is the chief blessing in the priceless package of salvation. There are no qualifications to receive it (other than faith along in Christ alone). Christ does not baptize Christians with the Holy Spirit because of their love, zeal, holiness, surrender, etc.). In fact, the baptism with the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 as they were just sitting (Acts 2:2), not as they were making themselves qualified to receive the Spirit baptism.

7. Spirit baptism does not grant the believer a mere portion of the Holy Spirit, but grants all of the Holy Spirit as a free gift to believers in applying all that Christ has purchased for His people (the Holy Spirit is not divisible into parts). You either have all of the Holy Spirit, or none.

B. As we now consider Acts 2, the realization of what Jesus

promised in Acts 1:4-5 before He ascended into heaven. As we noted in the previous sermon, the Lord has appointed the Day of Pentecost (the first day of the week—the Lord’s Day) as the day in which to fulfill His promise of Spirit baptism.

1. The Day of Pentecost and its first fruit offering typified the resurrected Christ **as the first fruits** offering for the bodily resurrection of all believers and the from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20).

2. The Day of Pentecost and its first fruit offering typified the Holy Spirit **as the first fruits** of all the blessings Christ had purchased for His people and would apply to them by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:23).

3. The Day of Pentecost and its first fruit offering typified **the first fruits** of Jews and Gentiles from every land that would be brought to Christ as a token of all the nations that would be brought to Christ during the millennium (1 Corinthians 16:15).

4. Thus, the Day of Pentecost has arrived and the stage is set for the New Covenant blessing of Spirit baptism. The apostles and other brothers and sisters (120 of them) are gathered “with one accord” together in the peace, purity, and unity of Christ’s Church (Acts 2:1).

C. But where is Spirit baptism mentioned in Acts 2? We find a reference in Acts 2:4 to those believers being filled with the Holy Spirit, but as we shall soon see, this was not baptism with the Holy Spirit. If not, then when and where did Spirit baptism occur in Acts 2?

1. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is found in the two miraculous and symbolic manifestations displayed in Acts 2: the wind (Acts 2:2); and the fire (Acts 2:3).

a. First, the symbol of wind is used here to represent the Holy Spirit as is used to illustrate the invisible yet powerful work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:8).

(1) Note that this was an audible manifestation and representation of the Holy Spirit. There was no actual blowing of wind

that was felt by the disciples in the room where they sat. There was “a sound” that came “from heaven” (indicating that this gift proceeded from Christ upon His exalted throne), “as of a rushing mighty wind” (this was not the sound of a gentle breeze, but was the sound of a hurricane-like wind, and yet it was invisible).

(2) Here the Holy Spirit is represented in His irresistible power—nothing can stay His almighty hand—not the wickedness of man, not the money of man, not the military might of man, not the combined forces of the nations—nothing! The wind is invisible, and yet mighty, just like the Holy Spirit—Third Person of the Godhead. So this is the first indication of the Spirit baptizing these 120 believers.

b. Second, the symbol of fire is a very fitting symbol of the Holy Spirit who **purifies the heart of believers** in consuming that which impure (Exodus 24:17), **who illuminates the mind of believers** (7 lamps of fire burning, which represent the Holy Spirit, Revelation 4:5), and **who guides and leads the will of believers** (the pillar of fire by night in the wilderness led God’s people).

(1) Fire is used here in Acts 2:3 to represent the Holy Spirit as it is likewise used by John the Baptist who prophesied that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11).

(2) Note that the same preposition, “with”, joins “the Holy Ghost” and “fire”. In fact, the second “with” is used in italics, indicating that the word does not actually appear before “fire”. In Greek grammar, this is a baptism that comes with the Holy Spirit and also comes with fire—fire is simply a figure describing the Holy Spirit.

(3) This fire appeared as divided flames of fire within the room where the apostles and fellow believers in Christ were sitting, for the text states that “there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire” (Acts 2:3). These were individual tongue-like flames of fire that rested upon each person’s head. This is the second miraculous manifestation of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (first an audible

miraculous manifestation in the noise of the rushing mighty wind, and second a visible miraculous manifestation in the sight of the fire that rested upon each of the believer's heads in the room).

2. I submit that by these two signs of the Holy Spirit (wind and fire) these believers understood that the invisible baptism with the Holy Spirit had been granted to them by Jesus Christ from heaven. These believers were never again baptized with the Holy Spirit (they were filled with the Holy Spirit many times, but never again baptized with the Holy Spirit). As unrepeatable as these two signs of Spirit baptism were to these 120 believers (i.e. wind and fire), so likewise is Spirit baptism unrepeatable to not only the 120, but to all those who trust alone in Christ alone.

II. The Power of Spirit Filling Is Applied (Acts 2:4).

A. Now in Acts 2:4, there is another blessing (in addition to the baptism with the Holy Spirit) sent by Christ unto these 120 believers (as well as unto all Christ's redeemed ones): the filling with the Holy Spirit. What is it to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

1. The filling with the Spirit is an ongoing work of the Spirit in the life of all believers who have once and for all been baptized with the Spirit by the Lord Jesus (Ephesians 5:18). Quite literally, Paul commands the Church of Ephesus, "Stop being drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be continually filled with the Holy Spirit." Paul is not condemning wine in moderation, but wine in excess to the point of drunkenness.

a. Thus, here is a very marked difference between **Spirit baptism** (which is a blessing that the Lord Jesus gives once to every believer at the time of conversion) and between Spirit filling (which is an ongoing and daily filling that is needed for you to manifest the power of the Holy Spirit in your life in witnessing for Christ and in bearing fruit for Christ). Just as being filled with wine to excess in drunkenness yields

control of one's life to wine, so likewise being filled with the Holy Spirit will yield control of one's life to the Holy Spirit.

b. Once a believer receives the baptism with the Holy Spirit, there is never again any indication of multiple Spirit baptisms for that same believer in the New Testament (any more than there is any indication of multiple water baptisms in the New Testament—because water baptism signifies the promise of Spirit baptism). However, note that there are multiple Spirit fillings in the Book of Acts for the same people—Acts 2:4 (the 120); Acts 4:8 (Peter); Acts 4:31 (the apostles and other believers); Acts 9:17 (Paul); Acts 13:9 (Saul).

2. The filling with the Holy Spirit is the Spirit's operation that proceeds from the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Spirit baptism is the reservoir of Christ's blessings given to the Spirit to apply in the lives of every Christian. Spirit filling is the ongoing work of the Spirit in the life of the believer in applying the power, fruit, and blessings purchased by Christ for every believer.

3. In being filled with the Holy Spirit, you do not obtain more and more of the person of the Spirit, for you cannot divide the Spirit into parts as if to have $\frac{1}{2}$ of the Spirit. You either have all of the Spirit or none of the Spirit. Those who have none are lost; those who have all of the Spirit are the children of the living God (Romans 8:9). We don't gain more of the Spirit, but the Spirit gains more and more control over our lives as we are being sanctified and conformed to Christ's image.

4. The baptism with the Spirit is **a single act**, whereas the filling with the Spirit is **an ongoing work** in the life of the believer (similar to justification and sanctification).

5. The filling with the Holy Spirit was not simply a work in the life of the apostles to do that which was miraculous, but was also a work to do that which was very ordinary and non-miraculous to the glory of Christ—Ephesians 5:18—to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11); to walk as wise not as fools (Ephesians

5:15); to redeem the time (Ephesians 5:16); to be growing in the knowledge of God's revealed will and doing it (Ephesians 5:17); to worship in spirit and in truth (Ephesians 5:19-20); and to submit in the Lord to one another (Ephesians 5:21). To be filled with the Spirit is manifested by your growing in the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). When we grieve the Holy Spirit by our unrepented sin we will not be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

B. Our text closes by saying that when the 120 were filled with the Spirit (i.e. energized by the Spirit) the Lord Jesus by His Spirit gave to them the miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages they had never learned. I am not going any farther than that today, but we will continue next Lord's Day (God willing) to consider the gifts of the Spirit that Jesus bestows upon believers by His Spirit to bear witness to Christ, to build up the Church of Christ, and to glorify Jesus Christ.

C. As I close today, let me conclude by asking you: Are you being filled with the Spirit daily? Do you care? Do you want to be? Being filled with the Spirit is emptying yourself of what pleases you that you might be filled with what pleases Jesus. Being filled with the Spirit is crucifying you to the world and the world to you in order that the crucified, resurrected, and exalted Christ might gloriously reign upon the throne of your life. As Christians, we ought daily to pray that Christ would fill us with His Spirit (energize us and control us by His Spirit to grow in His doctrine and worship and to practice what we profess), and yet we should never pray that Christ would daily baptize us with His Spirit; for that has already been once accomplished, otherwise we would not be Christians at all.

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