What Does It Mean to Be Baptized with the Holy Spirit?
Scripture: Acts 2
Code: BQ123110

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. (Acts 2:4)

Being **filled with the Spirit** must be distinguished from being baptized with the Spirit. The apostle Paul carefully defines the baptism with the Spirit as that act of Christ by which He places believers into His body (Rom. 6:4–6; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). In contrast to much errant teaching today, the New Testament nowhere commands believers to seek the baptism with the Spirit. It is a sovereign, single, unrepeatable act on God's part, and is no more an experience than are its companions justification and adoption. Although some wrongly view the baptism with the Spirit as the initiation into the ranks of the spiritual elite, nothing could be further from the truth. The purpose of the baptism with the Spirit is not to divide the body of Christ, but to unify it. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, through the baptism with the Spirit "we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13; cf. Gal. 3:26–27; Eph. 4:4–6).

Unlike the baptism with the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit is an experience and should be continuous. Although filled initially on the Day of Pentecost, Peter was filled again in Acts 4:8. Many of the same people filled with the Spirit in Acts 2 were filled again in Acts 4:31. Acts 6:5 describes Stephen as a man "full of faith and the Holy Spirit," yet Acts 7:55 records his being filled again. Paul was filled with the Spirit in Acts 9:17 and again in Acts 13:9.

While there is no command in Scripture to be baptized with the Spirit, believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). The grammatical construction of that passage indicates believers are to be continuously being filled with the Spirit. Those who would be filled with the Spirit must first empty themselves. That involves confession of sin and dying to selfishness and self-will. To be filled with the Spirit is to consciously practice the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and to have a mind saturated with the Word of God. Colossians 3:16–25 delineates the results of "letting the word of Christ richly dwell" in us. They are the same ones that result from the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:19–33). As believers yield the moment by moment decisions of life to His control, they "walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16). (For a further discussion of the filling with the Spirit, see *Ephesians,* MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody, 1986].) The baptism with the Spirit grants the power that the filling with the Spirit unleashes. (For a further discussion of the difference between the baptism and the filling with the Spirit, see my book *Charismatic Chaos* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 191–93.)

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