

Baptism and Speaking in Tongues Won't Save You

Three Baptisms

By: Mike Porter

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My Spiritual Journey of Baptism:

I grew up not going to church and not believing in God. At fourteen years old I began to attend a Christian youth group when I heard that there were cute girls and sports there. In time I began to see the love, peace and joy of Jesus Christ moving in these Christian kids that were around me as well as the truth of the word of God that pierced my heart with a longing. The Holy Spirit began tugging at my hard heart to come to believe and receive Jesus Christ into my heart for the forgiveness of sins. The moment I came to faith and asked Jesus to forgive me and invited Him into my heart, a heavy burden dropped from me and I felt the Spirit tug me out of my chair. Immediately I felt this love, peace and joy fill me up. Tears filled my eyes as I walked out of the auditorium as a newborn babe in Christ to meet with someone to pray with me.

I didn't know the first thing about what it meant to live like a Christian, and basically continued in my old ways, though I knew that something drastic had occurred in me. It wasn't until almost two years later when I came to a point of brokenness and repentance and prayed to Jesus, "Lord, I don't know how to live the Christian life, but I'm going to find out!" I repented of all sin, began to faithfully attend church, and consumed the Bible with a passion, intent to follow every word of it. The Bible came alive and the Holy Spirit was drastically changing my life, revealing new areas in my life to grow in. This continued the rest of high school and college. God was growing me and using me to share the gospel and encourage fellow Christians. At 17 I got water baptized in a river in upper Michigan on a summer retreat. I shared my testimony with the group and was plunged into the water and brought out. That moment was such a powerful reminder of all the work that Jesus Christ had done and was continuing to do in my life. With great joy I gasped that first breath after being dunked and praised Jesus for all that He'd done for me.

In high school and college the churches I was involved did not believe in all of the spiritual gifts. I recall a conversation with a friend of mine at our high school youth group about "charismaniacs"- we didn't understand these spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and prophecy and made fun of those who did. I'd seen some television shows that focused so much on the gifts and emotional hype that there was no solid teaching of God's word and concluded at that time that those who spoke in tongues were at best immature in their faith, and at worst not saved at all and leading people astray. My teachers at church only reinforced these things, however, I still was puzzled by why God didn't clarify the issue better in His word- there were some passages in scripture that our teachers just glanced over, almost in embarrassment, as if the passages shouldn't really have been there in the first place. These teachers taught that tongues and some other gifts were only for a transitional period during the time of the apostles, to get the church

started, and were no longer needed today.

At the age of 23 I began slowly drifting away from God. The drift got worse and worse till eventually I stopped going to church and reading the Bible. At the age of 36 I hit rock bottom and once again sought out Jesus Christ with all my heart. I found a new church that was filled with the Spirit and with great joy fellowshiped with fellow believers-ones like me that had been broken and brought into the light and hungered and thirsted for God's word to be accurately taught, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book, and for the power of the Holy Spirit to take the word of God I was learning and help me to live it daily. This church was filled with power, and I could feel the Holy Spirit moving among people like never before. I came to learn about how the Holy Spirit wanted to unleash His power in all believers who would receive. This was called "Baptism with the Holy Spirit." I was very skeptical at first, with all the indoctrination I had previously in the church regarding these issues. Part of me wanted to leave the church, but another part saw the power of the word of God being accurately taught and the love and power of changed lives I saw there, so the Spirit kept bringing me back for more. Eventually I did a thorough study of the book of Acts and 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 and reached a conclusion that I had earlier been misled regarding spiritual gifts and baptism. I requested brothers and sisters to lay hands on me and pray over me that I would receive all that God had for me- His added power and anointing of my ministry of evangelism and discipleship and power in many other aspects of my life as well: power to overcome temptation and power to worship in spirit and in truth. I had the desires of simply to be more used by the Lord for His glory and to glorify Him through my life. I really wasn't concerned about speaking in tongues- I just wanted whatever God had for me to exalt Jesus Christ in my life and build up the church. It was at that time that I began privately to speak in tongues on occasion as I felt led by the Spirit.

I was greatly excited as God used me to further the gospel and sharpen me in evangelism, discipleship and teaching. I saw more spiritual fruit in my life than I had ever seen before. Once again I was focused on daily reading and studying the entire word of God and spreading that word to others. At age 37 I heard the Holy Spirit speak to my heart that I was healed of manic depression, which I had been taking medication for since I was 27. Members of the church laid hands on me and I knew that I was permanently healed (*see James 5:13-18*). I've been off medication for over two years now and praise the Lord for His wonderful gifts to me. Four months ago I heard the Spirit challenge me to begin street evangelism and have been excited to see some people give their hearts to Jesus Christ and many others that I got the privilege to share the glorious gospel with and plant many seeds of God's word. More and more have I felt like Jeremiah,

"His word was in my heart like a burning fire." (*Jeremiah 20:9*)

I stand in awe of the Holy Spirit's working in my life, becoming increasingly aware of my own weaknesses and praising Him for His power to use me as a tool for His glory.

I've shared my personal testimony to give you a backdrop of my life. The purpose of this writing is to persuade you regarding what I'm convinced the Bible teaches about

baptism. I'll present the basic doctrine I believe in first, then I will back it up with scripture, and finally I will challenge two main different doctrines found in the church today.

I see three distinct baptisms mentioned in scripture and an order to them. What steps do we go through to receive salvation and eternal life? What baptisms if any take place after we have received salvation?

Step 1:

Before we become believers, we hear and begin to understand the word of God (*Romans 10:17, James 1:17, 1 Peter 1:23*). The Holy Spirit begins to tug at our hearts- He is with (para) us, but He is not yet in (en) us.

Step 2:

There comes a point when the word of God convicts us of our sin and our need of salvation. We repent, believe in Jesus Christ for our salvation, and receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts. He is now in (en) us. This is accomplished only by God's grace through our faith. This is called "Baptism in the Spirit" and is distinct from other baptisms mentioned below, though other baptisms may occur immediately following or in conjunction with Baptism in the Spirit.

There are two other baptisms taught in scripture:

1. Water baptism: Water baptism is a command of scripture. It is a symbolic act to demonstrate externally to the world our commitment to live for Jesus Christ. It illustrates visually what has already taken place internally in our hearts: that we have died to sin and have been raised to newness of life through our rebirth, our baptism in the Spirit. It is a visual reminder to us that we have daily victory over sin (sanctification) and is a testimony to the world of their need for salvation and a witness to the church that we are members of it. Water baptism does not save us; it is a very important commandment and a work to be sought after because of our desire to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ in all things. Water baptism cannot be done until after one has placed their faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Baptism With the Spirit: is a filling of power, an overflowing, a coming upon, a pouring out of the Holy Spirit to anoint us with great power to flood us with spiritual gifts to build up the church. He is now upon (Greek: "epi") us. The focus of Baptism with the Spirit is not the gifts themselves, nor on emotional experiences, but using the gifts to glorify Jesus Christ and build up His church. In scripture, Baptism with the Holy Spirit has at times happened at the same time as Baptism in the Holy Spirit, but at other times it happened later. One does not need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit to be saved, but scripture does command us to "be filled with the Spirit" (*Ephesians 5:18*)- it should be the desire of every believer to receive all that God has for us and not restrict God's power in our lives in any way through unbelief. Thus every believer is to eagerly seek this baptism. There is an initial baptism with the Holy Spirit and there can be many "refreshenings" as well, with the purpose of receiving all that the Holy Spirit has

for us to accomplish His purposes in building the church. A summary of this can be taken from John the Baptist: “He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease.” (*John 3:30*) It’s not about us receiving more of the Holy Spirit, but of the Holy Spirit taking over more of us. Baptism with the Spirit cannot happen until one has placed their faith in Jesus Christ (been baptized in the Spirit).

The Holy Spirit in Us- Proof of Our Salvation

How do we know we have eternal life? How do we know we belong to Jesus Christ, that we are Christians? We know it because we have the Holy Spirit in us,

“You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His...But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” (*Romans 8:9,11 cf. 1 Corinthians 2:12, 6:19-20*)

“By this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us...By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit...whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him, and He in God.” (*1 John 3:24, 4:13,15*)

Notice in these passages that we know Christ is in us because the Spirit is in us, and we know the Spirit is in us because we have in all honesty and sincerity confessed that Jesus is the Son of God. There is no water baptism in this equation, only faith.

The Holy Spirit *in* Us- the Guarantee of Eternal Life

How does baptism in the Spirit relate to our guarantee of eternal life?

“Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has also given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” (*2 Corinthians 5:5*)

When we have been baptized in the Spirit, we have a guarantee of eternal life. How do we know we have the guarantee? Because the Holy Spirit is living in us. Is this guarantee truly a guarantee?

“He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” (*2 Corinthians 1:21-22, cf. Ephesians 1:13, 4:30*)

The word “*seal*” gives us a greater understanding of just what this guarantee means. Sealing was frequently used to close a deal and make it permanent. Sealing was put on Christ’s tomb to verify that it wouldn’t get broken into. Sealing is something that God does as a response to our faith, not something that we earn or can contribute to (such as by being water baptized). We are sealed when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, as long

as we continue in the faith (*Colossians 1:23*). We can't even take away the seal by our sinful works. Once the seal is there, it cannot be removed. It is a permanent protection and assurance, a guarantee of salvation. God is the One who puts the seal of the Holy Spirit on us when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. He gives the seal and it is permanent until the day of redemption when we go to see Jesus. The sealing indicates our eternal security, safety and ownership by God. It is also a symbol that the transaction is finished- no further conditions need be met- praise the Lord for this assurance we have! Because of this assurance we can now press on to all the fullness of the work that the Holy Spirit will lead us into with total freedom and no fear of condemnation (*Romans 8:1-2*)

The Gospel of Our Salvation: What is It?

The word "gospel" is found in the Bible 96 times! Just what is the core message of the gospel according to the Bible? Is water baptism part of the core message of the gospel? In all 96 occurrences of the word "gospel," water baptism is not mentioned once. Paul wrote,

"I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all [of utmost importance] that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (*1 Corinthians 15:1-3, cf. Romans 1:1-2*)

Paul made clear baptism wasn't the core of the gospel, but rather faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, something we "receive," not something we merit.

"For Christ did not send me to baptize [here referring to water baptism], but to preach the gospel." (*1 Corinthians 1:17a*)

In Romans and Galatians Paul stated the gospel that was even presented to Abraham and David

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.'" (*Galatians 3:8, Romans 4:1-10*)

Paul reminded us here that the gospel was promised beforehand in the Old Testament- as one reviews the prophecies of the Old Testament, water baptism isn't mentioned- it is not a part of the core of the gospel! The core gospel Abraham believed is faith in God's Messiah who would bless all nations. Abraham believed God, and God credited it to him as righteousness. Abraham looked forward to the promise of the cross, and we look back to the finished work that Jesus did on the cross, and by faith alone in that finished work of Christ we are saved. Paul stated,

“So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” (*Romans 1:16-17*)

Here Paul defines the core gospel: salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the One who died, was buried and rose again. This is what is of first importance. Yes, all other teachings of the Word of God are important, but the gospel that saves us is this simple message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. In Ephesians, baptism in the Spirit is tied into the gospel,

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” (*Ephesians 1:13*)

This passage shows when we received the gospel- when we believed. At that moment God sealed our salvation- the evidence being the Holy Spirit coming into us. In 115 passages in the New Testament, salvation is by believing and in another 35 passages, salvation is by faith, another word for believing. If salvation required faith plus baptism or faith plus works or faith plus anything else, the writers of scripture would have made sure to include such additions in these 150 passages. This is the glorious message of the gospel from cover to cover. (*See also John 3:36, 5:24, 6:29, 20:31, Mark 8:35, Acts 8:25, 40, 15:7, 16:31, 20:24, Romans 3:22, 4:5, 24, 5:1, 10:4, 16:25, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Galatians 3:22, Revelation 14:6*)

But What About *John 3:3*?

Does John 3:3 teach that we need to be water baptized to enter the kingdom of heaven? Let us take a closer look at what it means to be born again by first looking at John chapter 1:

“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (*John 1:11-14*)

This passage gives us several insights into what it means to be born again:

1. Being born again is something we receive, not something we do (such as getting water baptized).
2. Being born again happens to “those who believe in His name” and has nothing to do with water baptism.

3. John contrasts being born again (baptized in the Spirit) with being born of the womb- born of blood. Thus being born of blood is our first birth, a physical birth. Our second birth is when we are born again, a spiritual birth.

Does this match up with *John 3:3ff*? Jesus told the religious leader Nicodemus,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

What does “born of water,” mean here? What did Nicodemus understand it to mean? Jesus continued,

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.”

“Born of the flesh” is when we were born from our mother’s womb. Being born of the water is the same as born in the flesh (born of the blood). Jesus then said,

“and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Our spiritual birth is the moment we come to faith in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts. Jesus then further commented,

“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

When we come to believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts. We can’t see the Holy Spirit come into us, but as surely as we can see the effect of the wind on the trees, so we begin to see the effect of the Holy Spirit transforming our lives. Nicodemus, as one who hadn’t yet received this new birth in the Spirit, was still puzzled by this talk of a spiritual birth, and asked Jesus,

“How can these things be?”

Jesus clarified,

“whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned...” (*John 3:3-18*)

Jesus repeated the same message with slightly different words three different times, hoping it will sink in with Nicodemus, a man steeped in obeying a set of laws to obtain salvation. Thus this discourse between Nicodemus and Jesus about being born again is all about a spiritual birth through believing in Jesus and has nothing to do with water

baptism. These two passages in *John chapters 1 & 3* are not the only passages referring to being born again, or a rebirth. John tells us,

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” (*1 John 5:1, cf. 1 Peter 1:3, James 1:18, 2 Corinthians 5:17*)

John reminded us repeatedly in 1 John that it is faith alone that saves us. Near the end of this epistle he tells why he wrote 1 John,

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” (*1 John 5:13*)

Our salvation assurance is based completely on what we believe, not by anything that we do (or don't do), including water baptism.

Our good works, including getting water baptized, avoiding sin and using our spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ are logical next steps that are fitting for a believer in Christ who is born again of the Spirit. These good works don't have any bearing on our salvation (*2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 26:20, James 2:14*).

Circumcision and the Gospel

Several times Paul wrote with very strong words condemning those who would force Gentiles to be circumcised in order to be saved. Why was Paul so adamant about this?

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace [undeserved favor or gift which we simply receive] of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” (*Galatians 1:6-9*)

Paul went up with Titus to Jerusalem and,

“not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” (*Galatians 2:3-5*)

There were Jews eager to force circumcision on the Gentiles as a requirement for salvation, yet Paul vehemently opposed it. Why was he so forceful about it? Paul wrote in Romans what circumcision was all about,

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter.” (*Romans 2:25-29, cf. Galatians 5:1-6, Philippians 3:2-9*)

Paul’s repeated message about circumcision in Romans, Galatians and Philippians is that it does not save us, but faith alone in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross saves us. Our salvation could never be obtained by obedience to any laws, but only by faith in the One who canceled the debt for us.

Just as we are circumcised in our hearts if we believe in Christ, so also we are baptized in our hearts if we believe in Christ. It is the inner reality that counts, not what is on the outside. Circumcision is a physical symbol of an inner reality of faith in God. Water baptism is a physical symbol of the inner reality of what has already happened in our hearts. Paul writes comparing circumcision and baptism,

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead...” (*Colossians 2:11ff*)

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (*Galatians 3:26-27*)

This passage is referring to baptism in the Spirit, not water baptism, for it is received by faith in Christ Jesus.

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (*Ephesians 4:4-6, cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13*)

What baptism is being discussed in these passages? It must be baptism in the Spirit, for there are not two bodies, one that believes and hasn’t been water baptized, and those who believe and have been water baptized, but there is ONE body- the body of Christ-believers that have been baptized in the Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ. Notice how all the words relate to baptism in the Spirit, not physical baptism. We are a spiritual body, the church. There is one Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is spiritual, not physical. There is one hope, and that hope is not physical, but spiritual, one Lord, who is spiritual, one faith, which is spiritual, one God and Father, who is spiritual. The baptism is also a spiritual baptism, not a physical one by water.

The Significance of Water Baptism

In water baptism, when we come up out of the water, it represents that just as Christ rose from the dead, so we have arisen into a new life filled with Christ’s resurrection power to live by faith in Him. The water baptism is a very special moment, a physical reminder

that we can always look back upon of the finished work that Jesus Christ has already done in our hearts to conquer sin in us. Water baptism is also a public way to tell the world that we have a new Master, Jesus Christ, and we are identifying with Him and with other Christians- it is a public affirmation of the reality that nothing will separate us from our convictions that Jesus Christ is Lord and we belong to Him.

Are Tongues and/or Other Signs Necessary for Proof of Salvation?

Jesus gave a sober warning when He said,

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” (*Matthew 7:21-24, cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9, Revelation 13:13-14*)

Here Jesus said that there will be people practicing spiritual gifts: prophesying and doing many wonders, such as speaking in tongues, miracles and all other sorts of wonders. If they are done in the Spirit, that is wonderful, but signs alone are not a guarantee, says Jesus, that one is saved. What is a guarantee? According to Jesus in these words, the sign is that we know Him- that we’ve entered into a personal relationship with Him- that He is in us and we are in Him- that we’ve had a spiritual rebirth through faith in Jesus Christ. Never in the Bible is one commanded to speak in tongues, and never in the scriptures is speaking in tongues considered as final proof that an individual is saved. Several times after people got saved they spoke in tongues, but also there are instances when saved people hadn’t spoken in tongues. The focus of every instance in Acts when people got saved was that they believed in Jesus Christ, not that they got water baptized or spoke in tongues.

One sign that is always evident upon salvation is that the Holy Spirit always enters into a person the moment they believe and begins to transform a person’s life. Paul asked rhetorical questions about spiritual gifts including tongues to the church at Corinth:

“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?” (*1 Corinthians 12:29-30*)

Paul’s rhetorical questions demand the same answer every time: all are not apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers and those who speak in tongues. God distributes all the gifts as He sees fit, for one purpose,

“the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” (*1 Corinthians 12:7*)

The gifts all work together in unity, that

“all things be done decently and in order.” (*1 Corinthians 14:40*)

Woe to the church that is disorderly and full of confusion, where the Word of God is disrupted by those who have abused spiritual gifts to the point where the focus is on the fantastic instead of on orderly worship and careful teaching of the word of God. Paul challenged Timothy,

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...” (*2 Timothy 4:2-3*)

Paul sternly warned some in the Corinthian church that had got out of hand,

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God...for God is not the author of confusion but of peace.” (*1 Corinthians 14:27,28,33*)

Unfortunately, some churches have become so focused on tongues and other fantastic signs that they have lost contact with Christ and as a result have scared away non-believers and disrupted believers in their quest to hear the solid word of God,

“Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?” (*1 Corinthians 14:23*)

My friend, if you're in such a church, find another one where the emphasis is on the verse by verse teaching of the word of God and where the body is also filled with the Holy Spirit!

What About Baptism in the Book of Acts?

Now that we have a solid background in understanding salvation is by faith alone, we should be able to go back to all the passages in the book of Acts and confirm that this is indeed so- that indeed water baptism is not required for salvation. We will also begin to examine the “upon” work of the Holy Spirit, “epi” or baptism with the Holy Spirit.

A sequence of events occurred in *Acts chapter 10*:

1. Cornelius, a Gentile, had a vision, which told him to send for Peter, and he did so.
2. Peter went to Cornelius' house and preached the gospel.
3. “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon [‘epi’ - baptism with the Holy Spirit] all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they

heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.” (*Acts 10:44-46*) In this particular story the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the baptism with the Holy Spirit happen at the same time.

4. They were then baptized with water, “[Peter] commanded them to be baptized...” (*Acts 10:48*) Thus we see in this passage that the baptism in the Holy Spirit (for salvation) and the baptism with the Holy Spirit was received by the believers before they were baptized with water. They spoke in tongues before getting water baptized! Thus here is a firm example showing that water baptism is not required for salvation or eternal life or for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter later explained to the other apostles back in Jerusalem what happened to Cornelius and the other Gentiles who received the gift of the Holy Spirit:

“As I began to speak [not after they were water baptized, but before], the Holy Spirit fell upon [epiipto] them, as upon us at the beginning. Then 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 therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” (*Acts 11:15-17*)

Several things can be noted from this passage regarding baptism:

1. Peter reaffirms that indeed the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentile believers (baptism with the Holy Spirit) while Peter was speaking to them, not later at water baptism. Peter contrasted water baptism with the baptism with the Holy Spirit.
2. Peter affirmed that this was just the way it was (receiving the “upon” work of the baptism with the Holy Spirit) with all of the apostles, “as upon us at the beginning” (referring back to Pentecost, when the apostles received the baptism with the Holy Spirit). The timing for the two baptisms for the apostles wasn’t the same though. Unlike Cornelius and company, who received the gift of the Holy Spirit at the same time as being baptized in the Holy Spirit, the apostles clearly believed in Jesus and were saved prior to Pentecost (*Luke 10:20, John 13:10-11, 15:3*) and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit prior to Pentecost (*John 20:22*). However, they waited and believed for the baptism with the Holy Spirit that was promised to them (*Acts 1:5, Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, 24:49, John 1:33*), to give them power to proclaim the gospel, speak in tongues, perform wonders and endure persecution. Notice that this promise exists in all four gospels and the book of Acts- the Lord Jesus must have thought it to be a very important promise for all believers! “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon [eperchomai, (root word: epi)] 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*)
3. Peter recognized that the Gentile believers as well as the apostles had received the gift of the Holy Spirit as a gift- that there was absolutely nothing they could do to merit it, such as being water baptized, they simply needed to believe: “God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

What About Acts 2:38-41?

One favorite passage that many use to insist that we must be water baptized to be saved is *Acts 2:38-41*.

“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...Then those who gladly received his word were baptized...’ (*Acts 2:38, 41*)

Some claim from this passage that one must be baptized with water baptism and then speak in tongues to be saved. Note that in this passage again it is a gift that they are receiving, not a work that they have to do. Here in *Acts 2* they were baptized in (and also “with”) the Holy Spirit when they repented and believed in the message, “received his word,” and then were water baptized as an outward expression of the inner reality that had already taken place in their hearts. They were being obedient to God’s commands through Peter to go ahead and demonstrate their faith through the public ceremony of baptism. A key word to understand in this passage is “for.” One may argue that “baptized...for the remission of sins,” means that water baptism is necessary for remission of sins. However, the word “for” is the Greek word “eis”, which can mean, “with a view to,” “because of,” or “as a result of.” Thus, in this instance, to be consistent with all other passages we’ve already looked at that say we are saved, not by water baptism, but by faith, we must interpret the word “eis” to mean this: “Be baptized...because of the remission of sins” or “Be baptized...as a result of the remission of sins.” This makes sense. Because we’ve received forgiveness of sins, we should then be water baptized in obedience to the commands of Christ.

Notice in *Acts 2* that once again we see the “upon” work of the Holy Spirit: His spiritual gifts poured out to those who believe. In this case they are poured out at the instant of salvation.

As we read through other instances of people believing in the book of Acts, we can consistently see that it is faith that is required for belief, and upon belief they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. At times they received the baptism with the Holy Spirit at the same time, at other times they did not.

We read a very interesting case in Acts 8 where Philip is preaching Christ: “The multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did...when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized [water baptism]...Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them

money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said to him,

'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money.'" (*Acts 8:6-20*)

Let's review the sequence here:

1. They heard the word preached.
2. They believed in Jesus, receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
3. They were water baptized in the name of Jesus, for the forgiveness of sins
4. Later, the apostles came and laid hands on them.
5. They received the baptism with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit had "fallen upon" [*eimi epipipto*] them.
6. Simon was amazed at the power that was unleashed by the Holy Spirit, and in selfishness sought the gift for his own selfish purposes instead of seeking to do the will of God, and thus he was rebuked. Many should learn from Simon today not to seek the power or the experience, but to seek Jesus Christ and doing His will while receiving the gifts that God gives us. Paul told us, "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts." (*1 Corinthians 14:1*) The gifts are desirable, within the context of building up the church; "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all." (*1 Corinthians 12:7*) The gifts (power, manifestation) without love and unity were meaningless. Many seek the gifts today for their own self-gratification instead of for building up the church, but "if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." (*1 Corinthians 13:1*)

This passage in Acts 8 baffled me until I understood the baptism with the Holy Spirit. How is it that these people believed in Jesus, but then later were baptized to receive the Holy Spirit? My teachers back then would argue that this and other passages were just part of the transitional nature of the book of Acts, and that these gifts were no longer available for today, yet nowhere in scripture is there any new dispensation given- the church age is one age, not two, and the Holy Spirit responds to people in the same way in the early church age as He does today. It is only our lack of faith that hinders His working now in our lives the way that is recorded back then in the book of Acts. Unfortunately we read this note regarding Jesus' ministry in His home town,

"Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief."
(*Matthew 13:58*)

We should be careful not to put God in a box, for in our unbelief, we will fail to see the fuller glory and power He longs to reveal through us (*John 11:40, 14:12, Acts 6:8-10, 1 Corinthians 2:4, Ephesians 3:20*).

One main passage that teachers use to refute that the gifts are for today is *1 Corinthians 13:8*. They attempt to use this passage to split the church age into two ages: one age

being when the apostles were here, and another age after the apostles died. Let's look at this passage in its context and see what it means:

“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” (*1 Corinthians 13:8-12, NKJV*)

Note:

“when that which is perfect comes,” is rendered, “when perfection comes” (NIV) and “when the perfect comes.” (NASB)

This passage should be clear as to when the spiritual gifts such as tongues will cease: when Jesus (who is perfection) comes and meets His church in the clouds! In that day we will be perfect! When He returns, we will see Him “face to face” and not as in a mirror dimly! Do we see Christ face to face now? I think not. I don't think we see Him any more clearly than the first century church did! Oh, that I could see Him as clearly as Paul did! Certainly we won't need to speak in tongues or prophecy then- there will be nothing to prophecy about, and there will be perfect knowledge of God just as He perfectly knows us. Tongues won't be needed in heaven, for we will see Him face to face with perfect communication unhindered by our flesh. In a broader context, verse 8 is part of three chapters, *chapters 12-14*, in which Paul gives the Corinthian church instructions regarding spiritual gifts, including when and how to properly use the gifts of prophecy and tongues! One of his warnings is this,

“Do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.” (*1 Corinthians 14:39*)

There's one sweet passage that warns of two opposite errors in the church today that this writing addresses: neglect of tongues and abuse of tongues. Paul elsewhere warns,

“Do not despise prophecies.” (*1 Thessalonians 5:20*)

Some other notes from Acts and elsewhere about baptism with the Spirit:

1. We can look at the life of Paul and see that he was converted on the Damascus road (*Acts 9:3-9*), and three days later received the baptism with the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid hands on him. Thus did he then have power for both his own healing and for the ministry of preaching and miracles that he had. This, however, wasn't the only time that Paul had hands laid on him. When Paul and Barnabus were sent out from the church at Antioch, they laid hands on them and sent them on their way (*Acts 13:3*). We are all like Paul- so needy for a fresh move of the Spirit in our lives! We would do well to hear these words of Jesus

regarding His desire to give us what we need through the Spirit's anointing power, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (*John 7:37-39*) Here the tone of this passage, friends! Jesus isn't merely talking about being saved, but our continual need for the Niagara Falls of the Holy Spirit poured out and overflowing in our lives on a daily basis. Will we believe? Let us thirst, and let us allow Him to quench our thirst- He calls us to believe. Our need, His supply!

We have a continual need, and as we cry out in faith for a freshening of His Spirit for our souls so prone to weakness and wandering, He will give it to us,

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." (*Luke 11:9-13, cf. 18:1-8*)

Note this passage is not about salvation, for it is a son who is asking. As sons we cry out to the Lord as our Daddy, "Abba, Father" (*Romans 8:15*), and the

"Spirit helps us in our weakness." (*Romans 8:26*)

This passage in *Luke 11:9-13* is in the context of a story Jesus told about a persistent neighbor who banged on his neighbor's door late at night until he got out of bed and gave him some bread. How persistent and desperate are you day in and day out for a freshening of the Holy Spirit in your life and to thus cry out? How passionate are you for the kingdom to be advanced into the dark recesses of your soul?

"the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."
(*Matthew 11:12*)

How forceful and persistent is your crying out to God for His Spirit to fill you up and His will to be accomplished in your life? This passage in *Luke 11* tells us how to cry out-like a child in need of bread or fish or an egg. A child asks for such things from his father with expectancy and frequently, knowing his father will provide. Thus are we to ask our heavenly Father to refresh us in the Spirit! How easily we can put out the Spirit's fire (*1 Thessalonians 5:19*). Come before Him, asking for forgiveness of all sins, and a renewed filling and power to accomplish today all the work that He has for you.

1. Baptism with the Holy Spirit Before Pentecost

Throughout the Old Testament and in the gospels prior to Pentecost the Holy Spirit anointed chosen men and women for specific purposes of God, such as kings, priests, prophets, disciples and special builders of the temple. They were not sealed in the Holy Spirit, but anointed with power to accomplish the work God had called them to. Their anointing is the same in that respect as ours is. That anointing could be lost, such as Saul, when he disobeyed God. Likewise can we quench the Holy Spirit through lack of faith or disobedience (*1 Thessalonians 5:19*)

Jesus was baptized with the Holy Spirit when he was water baptized. John said,

“I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.” (*John 1:32*)

Immediately after baptism with the Holy Spirit,

“At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert.” (*Mark 1:12*)

and after the temptation,

“Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.” (*Mark 1:14*).

It was no coincidence that His ministry started after baptism with the Spirit. His ministry required the anointing power of the Spirit to be accomplished. Likewise must we have this anointing to minister the gospel to a lost world and to overcome temptations of the devil!

Joel prophesied and Peter quoted,

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.” (*Acts 2:17-18, quoting Joel 2:28-32, cf. 1 Corinthians 14:21 quoting Isaiah 28:11-12*)

We are in the last days, my friends- the last days are the church age, beginning with Pentecost and ending with a bang soon when Jesus Christ returns to rapture His church. We always have needed the Spirit poured out on us. Peter’s use of this passage is to demonstrate that the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament anointing a few select individuals would now become one of being poured out on all believers as they believed. The gifts are available for all believers today! Peter reminded us at Pentecost that the promise was not just for those at Pentecost:

“...and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (*Acts 2:38-39*)

That's you and that's me! The gifts are for the asking- call out to the Lord with faith and in all earnestness, and watch Him pour out power in your life to accomplish His purposes as your heart is right before Him.

There are a few of you that are intrigued by this teaching of baptism with the Holy Spirit, wondering about it, but haven't yet come to a decision. I encourage you, for I was at that point at one time. Read through *1 Corinthians 12-14* and the entire book of Acts. Before you begin, ask the Lord, "Lord Jesus, show me the truth regarding these things." He has promised you His wisdom for those who earnestly seek the truth and plan to act on what He reveals (*James 1:5*)

I pray that this writing will somehow help you in your foundation of elementary principles, that we may press on to know the perfection of the Lord.

"Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits." (*Hebrews 6:1-3*)

In Christ's Love,

Mike Porter