

Text: Acts 19:1-7
Intended audience: Christians
Topic: Baptism in the Holy Spirit
Theme: What constitutes Baptism in the Holy Spirit?
My purpose for this message: To help Christians understand what has become a confusing doctrine.
Delivered: Sept. 26, 2004 @ KEFC

[Book Thesis: *The Power of God Spreads the Gospel*]

Spirit Baptism

35 years ago, Peggy Lee won a Grammy for a strange song, *Is that all there is?* Musically unpleasant, it was a tribute to nihilism. The singer remembers her daddy carrying her out of their burning house when she was very little. When the fire was over, she wondered, “Is that all there is to a fire?” At 12 she saw the circus but when it was over, again wondered, “Is that all there is to a circus?” And then she fell in love. But when it too ended, she asked, “Is that all there is to love?” The chorus is a croak of resignation:

*Is that all there is, is that all there is
If that's all there is my friends, then let's keep dancing
Let's break out the booze and have a ball
If that's all there is*

Did you ever think about your faith and wonder “Is that all there is?” You want more: an experience that will *invigorate* my faith, one that will *prove* my faith.

Dotting Lancaster County are perhaps 75-100 churches that urge Christians to seek an experience that might fit into that category: the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The notion goes that it happens *after* conversion—could be days, could be years—and gives greater power for witness, greater flow of spiritual gifts, and greater holiness and devotion. Most believe that the evidence it’s happened, is that the person speaks in tongues.

Now, “baptism in the Holy Spirit” is certainly a biblical phrase. But what is it, when does it happen, and what does it look like when it does? We’ll try to answer those questions today. READ Acts 19:1-7. PRAY.

The Story

During Paul’s 3rd mission trip, he went to Ephesus for 3 years. In the course of his work there he met a group of about 12 men. Perhaps they had come to the local church and offered their services. Although Luke says they’re “disciples” (2), for some reason, Paul has reservations about them.

“Did you receive the HS when you believed?”

“Didn’t even know there *was* a Holy Spirit.”

“What baptism did you receive?”

“John’s.” That’s not good enough for Paul so he proceeds to explain what’s deficient, baptizes them in the name of Jesus, lays hands on them, they receive the Holy Spirit baptism, and they speak in tongues—and prophesy.

Which leaves us with 3 riddles to solve:

1. *Were men already Christians?*
2. *Does God baptize us in the Spirit at conversion, or later?*
3. *Do Christians who are Spirit baptized speak in tongues and prophesy?*

Riddle #1: Were these men already Christians?

It doesn’t seem like Paul thinks so. And yet...

1. Everywhere else in Acts, it's only Christians Luke calls "disciples."
2. Everywhere else in Acts, it's only Christians Luke says "believed." With one possible exception. READ Acts 8:13 (share context).

Simon's salvation was at best—debatable. Maybe these 12 were somewhat like him: *professing* disciples. Because v.4 only makes sense *if* they weren't yet converted. After they've told Paul they were baptized by John's baptism, Paul shakes his head.

I doubt John *himself* spoke to these men because his sermons were clear on the very two things the 12 men *weren't*: the coming Messiah, and the coming Spirit baptism (READ Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7-8).

Paul explains: "No, no, John's baptism was just for repentance; of the initial step of faith. What he intended was for you to come to believe in the one who comes after him—" and then Paul has to explain *who* that is! Jesus.

Paul concludes they're not saved, and gives them the gospel. Apparently they then surrender to Christ, are baptized in Jesus' name, and when Paul lays hands on them, are baptized in the Holy Spirit. How did anyone know? Because they began to speak in tongues and began to prophesy—speak some message from God. (Note for later: tongues were also given on 3 other occasions of Spirit baptism in Acts, including the day of Pentecost. We'll get to the subject of tongues in a minute.)

Riddle #2: Does Spirit baptism occur at conversion, or later?

Obviously, how you solve riddle #1 influences how we solve *this* riddle. I think the 12 were unsaved, but once they *were* saved, were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Same today. When Jesus saves, the Holy Spirit comes; to *every* Christian. READ 1 Cor.12:13. Notice that there are no Christians in the Corinthian church still waiting on Spirit baptism. "You have *all* been baptized." Others disagree: CM & A doctrinal statement:

7. It is the will of God that each believer should be filled with the Holy Spirit and be sanctified wholly, being separated from sin and the world and fully dedicated to the will of God, thereby receiving power for holy living and effective service. This is both a crisis and a progressive experience wrought in the life of the believer **subsequent to conversion.**

(This would also be true of our friends in AG, Foursquare, and many charismatic churches.) They might suggest, "Well, even if these 12 did not have a two-step conversion and Spirit-baptism, other instances in Acts clearly *do* depict it. What about the Day of Pentecost when 120 people who had *previously* clearly been Christians, didn't receive the HS until the Day of Pentecost?

What about the Samaritans in Acts 8 who were Christians, but who were not baptized with the HS until Jerusalem sent a couple of apostles to observe? I agree on the details. But not necessarily the conclusion. Consider, what if they were *unique* occurrences, for *unique* purposes, that no longer exist? Follow my thinking: the first four books of the NT are a historical record of Jesus' life and teachings (they are history books). Acts is a historical record of the early church (it's a history book). The *rest* of the NT is not mainly a history book: it contains the *teachings* for Christians, what to do, what not to do. What to believe, how to believe. Yet never once do any of the writers in those books urge Christians seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That silence is odd if this is something imperative, something we should seek.

So, HS baptism was years late for the Christians on the Day of Pentecost, because only once Jesus returned to *heaven* was the Spirit given to **all** believers for the first time. READ Jn.16:7. So, Acts 2's not a problem. Pentecost only occurred once.

But, why a two-step thing in Samaria? Imagine what it would take for God to convince Israelis today, to trust Palestinians—more, to love them? Well, that's what it took to convince Jewish Christians that God was working among Samaritans, and that He loved them, and that they were to be treated as brothers and sisters, rather than dogs.

If this thesis is correct, God *deliberately* delayed the Spirit baptism until reliable Jewish Christian leaders went to Samaria to actually *see* God pour out His Spirit on them. They went back to report to the Jewish Christians: "You're not going to believe this." The delay worked to draw 2 hateful people groups together under God's banner.

One final thing on this: some, while admitting that the Spirit baptism in 1 Cor.12:13 applies to all Christians, protest that it's not the *same* Spirit baptism mentioned 6 times in the gospels and Acts (Matt.3:11 [READ]; Mk.1:8; 3:16; Jn.1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16. Because it 1 Cor. it's translated "*by* the Spirit," and everywhere else, "*with* the Spirit." But, the Greek vocabulary and grammar contains no such distinctions: it's virtually identical in every passage: same preposition, same noun, same case; it's the same thing.

Riddle #3: Do Christians who are Spirit baptized speak in tongues?

In Acts 2 at Pentecost, they did. In Acts 8, we *assume* the Samaritans did (some way they could tell outwardly). In Acts 10, Cornelius and his household, did. And here in Acts 19, the 12 did. *If* Spirit baptism occurs to all Christians, do all speak in tongues?

No. Now, a fuller answer would demand another message. Like, why don't at least *more* people speak in tongues than seem to. Like I said, that's another message.

READ 1 Cor.12:27-31. Not *all* speak in tongues.

Concl:

Sum up: the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred at the moment you cried out to God, "Have mercy on me a sinner." (1 Cor.3:16: *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*) And, He moved in *permanently* (2 Cor.1:22 ...[He] *put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*)

Although conversion may have produced tears of joy, a smile, remorse for sin, a sense of great relief, the Spirit baptism itself caused no sensation. But in a split second, it placed you as a permanent member of the body of Christ.

Final thoughts: So how should we understand the "experience" of some believers? They claim that as a result of their Spirit baptism, they have been transformed. Do you know the sorts of things that people are urged to do to prepare for what they call baptism in the Spirit? Repent of all known sin, pray, yield oneself fully to God, worship, and wait on God. Wow! No wonder people become rabid about what they "experience." The *preparation* is a surefire prescription for spiritual growth!

Acts 1:8: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.* Power for victorious living, power for witness, power for worship. You can *bury* the power beneath a landfill of sin and neglect, or unleash it through the pursuit of God through repentance, His Word, His people and prayer.

I hope you are *not* satisfied with your walk with Christ. Never be. But do not fall into the trap of looking for some shortcut to spiritual growth and maturity.