

Baptism of the Spirit

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Preacher: Brian King

[0 : 00] Thank you, Marina.

Now, for those of you who are perhaps passing through this morning, we're currently in the middle of a series on the Holy Spirit. And today we're halfway through. We're in our fourth sermon today.

And just like before, I've been telling you that during this sermon series, it's probably a bit difficult for me to quote every verse, but every verse that is relevant will be on your handout.

And also, I'm going to assume a bit of basic familiarity with the Book of Acts this morning. So if you find yourself a little bit lost when I talk about the Book of Acts later on, don't worry, you can always go back and read the relevant passages on your outline later on.

But I am assuming a bit of basic familiarity. Let's pray.

[1 : 10] Heavenly Father, I just pray that you'll help me to be as clear as possible, as faithful as possible, as winsome as possible, so that your word might go out, that your truth might be impressed on our hearts, that we will come to a right understanding of what you have to say to us, and indeed rejoice and long for more of you and more of the Lord Jesus.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus and for his glory. Amen. An African man in his 30s reads his Bible, repents of his sin, believes in Jesus, and gets baptized in water.

He experiences a deep joy in God, is deeply thankful for his salvation, is gifted as a preacher and a writer, and shapes the theology of lots of people. But he never prophesies, speaks in other languages, or sees anybody physically healed.

Has he been baptized in the Spirit? A good, solid evangelical Baptist goes overseas on mission, and preaches the gospel for the best part of his life.

He never believes in a second experience of the conversion, never falls over under the influence, and certainly doesn't believe in apostles today, or the continuation of the supernatural gifts.

[2 : 40] But he preaches the cross to unreached people groups, sees numerous people saved and added to the church, and translates the Bible into several languages.

Has he experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit? A tattooed, drug-using, sexually abusive young man gets dramatically converted, and almost immediately experiences the miraculous power of God.

He begins leading people into powerful encounters with the Holy Spirit, and sees many people healed, including on television. But behind the scenes, his lifestyle raises questions, and he eventually has to step out of ministry for marital reasons.

Has he been baptized with the Spirit? So begins a blog post, which I've somewhat abbreviated, by the pastor Andrew Wilson, who is a charismatic, who writes for the magazine Christianity Today.

And you can see where this is going, he himself says. The people he's just described are not hypothetical people, but real ones. The first guy is Augustine, one of the greatest theologians of all time, who lived during the 4th century.

[4 : 04] The second is William Carey, back in the 17th century, often described as the father of modern missions. And the third is Todd Bentley, an evangelist who gained fame earlier this decade, where he led a ministry in Florida, where all sorts of amazing things were happening.

Which of them have been baptized in the Spirit? And how can you tell? After all, it's undeniable that some people have dramatic experiences, going from a legalistic, joyless, nominal Christianity to an encounter with God that brings them great joy and power and a tireless zeal for missions.

Was that because they had an experience of being baptized in the Spirit? But there are plenty of others who never, ever have such experiences, or who can't point to one singular moment which was particularly decisive for them spiritually.

What about them? Did they miss out? Did they get less of the Spirit? Over the past few weeks, we've been getting to know who the Holy Spirit is.

Rather than get immediately sidetracked by some of the issues that people often associate with the Holy Spirit, we've been trying to get to know him on his own terms, learning his backstory in the Old Testament, seeing how he relates to us through the Bible, and how he works in partnership with the Lord Jesus.

[5 : 50] I think that's really important because it makes sure that we don't lose sight of the person and the big picture. And it actually prepares us by laying the foundation on which to discuss some of these issues.

And eventually, we probably have to address one or two matters that have proved controversial amongst Christians over the past few decades. And the baptism of the Holy Spirit is one of them.

And the first thing I want to say immediately is this. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a matter that on its own is not a salvation issue.

So Christians have different views, but we are not safe by our view on this matter. unless our view also impacts how we think about justification or atonement in a way that changes the gospel.

Now that's a slightly different story. But the second thing I want to say is that that doesn't mean it doesn't matter. In Bible college, one of my lecturers helpfully said that evangelical Christians too often group things into two categories.

[7 : 13] Salvation issues and indifferent matters. Things that don't really matter. So often we say if the matter is not a salvation issue, then we don't really have to think about it.

Or we too quickly agree to disagree without looking at the Bible more. But he says it's better to think of three categories.

So salvation issues, matters of indifference, and secondary but still important matters. So is Jesus fully God, fully man?

What did he accomplish on the cross? Well, those are salvation issues. What colour should the church curtain be? Well, that's a matter of indifference.

And baptism in the Spirit should be placed in the middle category. That's secondary but still important. You see, the Bible is not completely silent on this matter.

[8 : 21] The New Testament does paint a picture of what baptism in the Spirit is for us to consider. And so we should try hard to understand rightly what the Holy Spirit says in his word.

And what we think about this matter can shape the way we view the Christian life for good or for bad. And let me just say from the outset that on this issue it's not as simple as non-charismatic versus charismatic which is how some of us might view it.

The late pastor Martin Lloyd-Jones was considered one of the greatest English-speaking preachers of the 20th century and he's deeply theologically conservative on all sorts of things.

And yet his view on this matter is basically the same as the classic Pentecostal position which I will describe later. On the other hand more and more pastors who identify as charismatics today from their study of Scripture are increasingly coming to conclusions similar to the one that I'm going to argue for today.

So if you look at the outline already this morning and you thought oh well looks like Pastor Brian is going to go for a non-charismatic view well I could say to you it's actually the opposite.

[9 : 50] I'm more or less on the same page with many of today's mainstream charismatics who take the Bible seriously. my point is as I teach on this today I'm not trying to pick a side I'm trying to present to you what I think is the most biblical understanding and I find encouragement that increasingly whether they identify as non-charismatic or charismatic many who have studied the Bible seriously are coming to similar understandings.

so let's start by looking at the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Bible there are only seven references all in the New Testament to baptism in the Spirit they're all on your hand out and actually six of those seven references all refer to one person saying the same thing that's John the Baptist talking about Jesus if we were to take Luke chapter 3 verse 16 as an example this is what he says John the Baptist answered them all I baptize you with water but one who is more powerful than I will come the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire so this statement is also recorded by Matthew Mark and John with the latter two shortening it slightly and in

Acts chapter 11 verse 16 Peter references these words of John the Baptist as well so that's five of the references already so what is he talking about well let's begin with who John the Baptist is John baptized people that hands his name before Jesus came baptism was what Gentiles had to undergo to convert to the Jewish religion they were dipped into the water and that basically meant that they agreed Yahweh is Lord and so baptism is very much associated with conversion when people thought about baptism they thought about converts it also had to do with repentance so John was actually baptizing Jewish people because it was their way of saying we want to turn back to

God we want to start again and that's why it sometimes said that John is preaching a baptism of repentance so John is a baptizer calling people to repentance and to change allegiance that's who he is but what else is he well he's also the forerunner of Jesus the one sent by God to prepare the way for his coming so that tells us he's only the opening act John's not asking people to turn away from their sins and believe in himself or declare allegiance to him because he's not the savior king rather he's only the preparation the rehearsal the sign pointing to this king who brings in this kingdom and he's asking people to turn to this king not him so that's what

John is also what he also is so why Jesus and not him because he says though I baptize you with water Jesus will come and baptize you with the Holy Spirit there's going to be a difference between what I will do and what Jesus will do my work is external and symbolic it's just water after all whereas Jesus' work is internal and transformative the water baptism I do is merely a picture a sign spirit baptism is the reality the real thing and that's the work of Jesus his work is far greater than mine so what is this internal work that Jesus is going to do well to his Jewish hearers the mention of baptizing with the

[14 : 38] Holy Spirit would have made them recall certain Old Testament promises we mentioned some of these in our first sermon but it's worth recalling what they are here's Ezekiel chapter 36 verses 26 to 27 for example receiving the spirit there is associated with a transformed heart or take Ezekiel chapter 39 in verse 23 we're told and the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin because they were unfaithful to me so I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies and they all fell by the sword so here

God is talking about sin and judgment a breaking of relationship but then a few verses later in verse 29 we are told this I will no longer hide my face from them for I will pour out my spirit on the people of Israel declares the sovereign Lord and so the coming and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is associated with forgiveness and repentance with the restoration of God's kingdom with new life and a new age and a new covenant to come for somebody to truly start again for the kingdom to come to have God turn his face and be in relationship with them again they needed the spirit to be poured out on them and so the prophet Isaiah also uses similar language saying the same thing we won't look at them this morning but the verses are on your handout in other words to turn back to

God they need to be baptized with the spirit and therefore baptism of the holy spirit is what happens at conversion everything here is pointing towards baptism of the spirit as an initiatory experience whenever somebody believes in Jesus Jesus will plunge them into God's spirit like John plunges people into the water and they will receive all these benefits a new heart being in relationship with God receiving the new covenant and so on when you repent and turn to Christ God's spirit is poured out on you this understanding finds confirmation when we consider the only reference by Paul to baptism of the spirit in 1

Corinthians chapter 12 verse 13 here it is on the screen starting from verse 12 just as a body though one has many parts but all its many parts form one body so it is with Christ for we were all baptized by one spirit so as to form one body where the Jews or Gentiles slay for free and we were all given the one spirit to drink now notice what verse 13 says everyone was baptized by or with the preposition can also be translated as with one spirit into one body in other words at the time you became part of God's people that is at conversion you were immersed into the spirit earlier in verse 3 he says that the only way you can declare

Christ is Lord is if you have the Holy Spirit so when do people declare that Christ is Lord when they become Christians else elsewhere Paul says in Romans 8 verse 9 if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ they do not belong to Christ you can't be a Christian and not be plunged in the Holy Spirit in this way now so far what I presented to you is what can be considered the classic evangelical view although like I said before it's also nowadays the mainstream charismatic view sometimes people call it the one stage view because the baptism of the spirit is simultaneous with conversion but there is another view which is commonly known as the two stage view in this view baptism of the

[19 : 55] Holy Spirit is subsequent to and distinct from conversion so you become a Christian and later on you have some sort of experience called the baptism of the Holy Spirit now historically the Wesleyans that is the followers of John Wesley the founder of the Methodist movement held to a two stage view John Wesley taught a doctrine called entire sanctification which is quite complicated and hard to understand but basically he taught that after conversion Christians should desire to have another kind of experience which if you have it basically takes you to a different and higher level of holiness where sinful motivations are no longer present in your heart and this he occasionally called baptism of the

Holy Spirit but the important thing to note is that he thinks of it as two stages conversion first and then this experience which he calls baptism of the Spirit and for him that baptism of the Spirit is all about holiness and purity later later on in the 19th century another movement known as the holiness movement took this Wesleyan teaching about baptism of the Holy Spirit and they shifted the emphasis so that it was more about victory and power than about purification and then one of the teachers from the holiness movement Charles Panham became convinced that the evidence you had this experience was speaking in tongues now up to that point tongues was not in the picture and so that set the stage for the view taken by classic

Pentecostals who came in the early 20th century after the holiness movement and so the two distinctives of classic Pentecostals are these you probably know it number one that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is subsequent to conversion and number two that speaking in tongues is evidence you have this baptism and so now the stress moves to tongues and as we'll see in a moment they appeal to certain passages in the book of Acts to make their case so that's just to give you a rough idea of how the Pentecostal two-stage view which many of us probably have heard of how it developed as probably most of us don't realize its historical roots now we will dive back into the scriptures in a moment but first let's ask does it matter whether you take one or two-stage view well yes

I think it does now obviously one reason it matters is because one of those options has to be less in line with the bible so that's already a good reason to think hard about it but also because it impacts how you view the Christian life if you believe in the two-stage view basically that means you have divided Christians into two groups there will be one group who have had this experience whether it's supposed to bring you to a higher level of holiness like John Wesley taught or empowers you to speak in tongues as classic Pentecostals teach and then there will be another group of Christians who don't have this experience and so from a strictly logical point of view that means you have some higher class Christians and some lower class Christians now of course I'm sure that we have many loving

Pentecostal brothers and sisters who would be horrified to be accused of dividing Christians in this way they're not looking down on others but logically speaking that's what we have I remember a school friend who was at a Christian camp where he felt pressured to speak in tongues and so he pretended now his friends sincerely wanted the best for him which to them meant that they really wanted their friend to get this kind of spirit baptism to speak in tongues so they kept praying for him and telling him that they hoped that he would experience it but while they thought that they were showing love to him all he actually felt was confusion and insecurity that they had something that he didn't although all of them were believers so he felt like an inferior Christian he thought maybe God was punishing him because he did something wrong and so already we can see that something is not quite right since 1

[25 : 10] Corinthians chapter 12 which is where we found that reference to baptism of the spirit and which we will look again at next week speaks against this kind of division something seems off but let's go back to the scriptures to see if this two stage view holds up let's have a look at some passages in Acts and I'll try to my best look at the detail without getting us lost so let's start with the seventh reference where baptism of the Holy Spirit is mentioned and that's in Acts chapter 1 verse 5 let's start from verse 3 after his suffering Jesus presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive he appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God on one occasion while he was eating with them he gave them this command do not leave

Jerusalem but wait for the gift my father promised which you have heard me speak about for John baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit now when we look at this passage at first it looks like this lends credibility for the two-stage view after all it seems like the disciples only get baptized by the Holy Spirit at a later time in Acts chapter 2 but we must take into account the unique time of salvation history that they were in you see at this point there is still one more thing that Jesus has to do to complete his mission here on earth so to speak as he himself said last week in John 16 verse 7 he must go away first before the Holy Spirit can come so that's one more thing for him to do so at the beginning of Acts we're looking at a unique time of transition from the old covenant age to the new covenant age now the apostles are aware they're at the threshold of this unique time which is why in verse 6 they ask

Jesus when is the kingdom going to come you see they're not being stupid and ignorant as is commonly taught no no no they know they are old testament they saw all these things happening to Jesus he's died he's risen again and anyway back in verse 3 Jesus has just been teaching them about the kingdom so of course it makes sense to us Lord alright so when is this kingdom going to come and Jesus answers in chapter 1 verse 7 to 8 the sign that my kingdom has truly arrived is when the Holy Spirit is poured out on you well you yourselves know that from the Old Testament so don't worry wait for me to go back to my father and I'll keep my promise and that's what happens in Acts chapter 2 where Jesus goes away and then the Holy Spirit is poured out on God's people signaling that the new age has begun and so when

Peter stands up to give up his speech in Acts chapter 2 notice how much he stresses what is happening as fulfillment the emphasis here is on fulfillment of the Old Testament promises that the new covenant age is finally here so you can go back and look at verses 32 and 33 for example it's a unique time in history not a pattern for us today and that's why at the end of his speech in Acts chapter 2 verse 38 to 39 Peter calls on the crowd to repent and be and be baptized and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and so he's clearly saying if you turn to Christ you get two things there and then forgiveness forgiveness and the

Holy Spirit that's in line with the Old Testament promises now that this new age has dawned receiving the Holy Spirit is part and parcel of getting saved it's not a subsequent experience of some sort and that's true for the remainder of Acts after Acts 1 and 2 it's hard to find any instances where something like this two stages happen conversion and then getting baptized in the Spirit later on there are really only two passages left where it looks like something like that is happening and of the two passages one of them once we look at it closely clearly shows that it's definitely not two stages but let us take the less clear cut one first which is in Acts chapter 8 in context up to this point the

[30 : 47] Christians have been in Jerusalem but in chapter 8 verse 1 persecution happens and so the Christians were all scattered throughout Judea and Samaria apart from the apostles and so Philip goes to a city in Samaria and he preaches the gospel there and then in verses 14 to 17 we're told that there are new believers and surprisingly the Holy Spirit has not come on them and they only receive him when the apostles come down to pray for them so there does seem to be two stages here the Samaritan believers are converted and only a little later on they get baptized in the Holy Spirit so what's happening here well first of all notice again the uniqueness of this episode it is the only record in the entire

New Testament where people believe in Jesus is baptized in water and don't receive the Holy Spirit at all that's why Luke tells us about this incident in the first place not because it's typical but because it's so unusual so what's happening here to understand what's going on we must remember that Jews and Samaritans really really hated each other Samaritans were descendants of Jews that had intermarried with Gentiles and were considered impure the Jews hated them so much that they would rather take a longer route to get to their destination than take a short cut through Samaritan areas and so if the Samaritans have really accepted the gospel well that's a huge deal remember what Jesus said back in Acts chapter 1 verse 8 the gospel will go from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth well that's incredibly radical for the

Jews who were so used to thinking about themselves as the only ones included into God's people that their enemies such as the Samaritans could become one of them requires a major paradigm shift and that's why when Samaritans for the first time here in the book of Acts are turning to Jesus well the apostles who are in Jerusalem remember they sent two of their biggest guns Peter and John to come and give their seal of approval well that's another clue that this is an unusual event you don't just deploy Peter and John anywhere and how would they be able to confirm that the Samaritans are the real deal to the skeptical Jews back home well God makes it so that it's like a mini

Pentecost all over again by praying and seeing the Holy Spirit descend on these Samaritans the apostles can now rest assured yes really these apostles sorry these Samaritans have really accepted Jesus God has given the same blessing to them that he has given the Jews back in Acts chapter 2 and so God is protecting the unity of his church at a sensitive time the entrance of the Samaritans into the church could have really raised tensions and so again it's a unique event not a paradigm for us we find nothing else like this in the entire New Testament I think there's another clue in the text as well as in Acts 11 later on that affirmed what I've just said but I think we have to keep moving so let's press on the other passage is

Acts chapter 19 verses 1 to 6 and this one is more straightforward we won't read it aloud now but basically Paul meets some people who are called disciples and they have not heard of the Holy Spirit in fact they only know John's baptism in other words they don't seem to have even believed in Jesus so although they are called disciples clearly they're not believers perhaps they're merely the disciples of John the Baptist they've not heard of they've not really heard of the Holy Spirit they've not heard of Jesus so whatever the case is that means the moment they received the Holy Spirit they were actually converted they were not Christians receiving a second experience of the Holy Spirit they were non-Christians becoming Christians it's not the case of two stage but one stage and once we've looked past these two passages there are simply no other places in

[36 : 13] Acts where we find anything like this two stages conversion and then later on an experience that is named the baptism of the Spirit and Christians are never told in Acts to pray and wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit now that's because as Michael Green puts it baptism of the Spirit is the Christian starting point not the goal we've been baptized by the Spirit the moment we become Christians now let me quickly try to draw out at least one implication and hopefully I can at least sketch out the last point if all that we've said is true so far well that means no Christian should ever feel insecure about whether they have the Holy Spirit no Christian should ever be made to feel that because they don't have the gift of tongues or some sort of very special experience they are somehow lacking that is not the testimony of

Scripture all Christians wonderfully have been baptized by the Spirit even if our subjective experiences differ some of us might have pretty dramatic conversions some of us might not some of us could even have been given tongues at that moment that's quite possible but many wouldn't but to go back to our first sermon all Christians now have a new pulse the presence of God and access to God's power that's what's important not our subjective experiences and actually if all have been baptized in the Spirit at conversion well that should lead to unity of the Spirit because we don't look down on each other however that still leaves one question hanging what about somewhere like Ephesians chapter 5 our Bible reading this morning where we are asked or commanded even to be filled with the

Holy Spirit and this is where the language we use is very important because what Paul is talking about here is different from the baptism of the Holy Spirit so all the stuff that I've been describing so far at conversion that's baptism of the Holy Spirit but now we're talking about the feeling of the Holy Spirit which is something different so let's just end today by briefly examining our Bible reading for this morning Ephesians chapter 5 you might want to turn there in your Bibles it won't be on the screen so so far in Ephesians in chapters 1 to 3 Paul has proclaimed what Christ has done and then in chapters 4 to 6 he's talking now about what it means to live as a Christian and in that context in chapter 5 verse 18 he talks about being filled with the Spirit now the idea here is not of a one of experience but of something ongoing so the

Greek tenses of verse 18 makes that clear that it's an ongoing experience we can be filled with or by the Holy Spirit again and again so what does that mean well let's look at the immediate context first notice that in verses 15 to 17 Paul keeps making contrasts the first contrast is in verse 15 don't be unwise but wise understand what the Lord's will is that's wisdom and so when we get to verse 18 we should understand that once again Paul is making a contrast don't get drunk on wine he says instead be filled with the Holy Spirit and so the idea here is of who has control over you who has influence over you if you are under the influence of alcohol you will behave without any self control you'll be a wild person but if you're under the influence of the

Holy Spirit well that means you'll be self controlled you'll live in a way that pleases Christ so it's not about extreme manifestations where you lose control of your faculties it's the opposite and in fact when we look at the book of Ephesians as a whole to be filled with the Holy Spirit is actually to be filled with Christ for whenever we encounter the language of fullness in Ephesians it's always associated with knowing Jesus better just look back at Ephesians chapter 3 verse 16 to 19 there we find Paul praying that through the Spirit Christ will dwell in us in such a way that we may know him better and better now this is how he thinks about it when we become

[41 : 49] Christians Jesus comes to dwell in us we saw that last week he doesn't just come like a visitor he has come to really make us his home now that he lives in us he is ready to start some renovation work he will go from room to room to see what needs fixing so perhaps in our hearts he goes into the room of how we speak and then he looks at it and he says okay this one only needs a touch up and then he goes into the next room it's the room of priorities and then he says oh this needs a complete make over you see he wants to fill us with the full measure of himself he wants us to be more and more like him and that's why when we turn over to the next chapter in 4 verse 13 we discover that the aim of the church is for us to attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of

Christ to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to increasingly let Jesus have influence over us so that we will be more like him so in one sense instead of getting more of the spirit as some Christians like to say it's more a case of the spirit getting more of us and it doesn't have to do with tongues per se more than that to be filled with the spirit is also to be Christ like in our relationships with God and with others that's what verses 19 to 21 are all about they're describing spirit filled behavior now verses 19 to 21 in the NIV I think it's broken up into several sentences but it's actually all connected together in the original language and notice that in verses 19 and 21 we are to encourage one another in the way we sing and in verse 21 we are to submit to one another that is to be humble towards one another to relate to one another in godly ways which is what chapter 5 verse 22 to 6 verse 9 goes on to describe and then in the second half of verse 19 as well as verse 20 we are also to give thanks to the lord even as we worship him in song and so that's what being filled with the spirit is all about it's about speaking truth in love it's about giving thanks to god now people often think of being spirit filled as an essential as a personal and private thing but notice that in

Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18 to 21 nothing could be further from the truth it's a community thing and so while baptism of the spirit is a one off unrepeatable thing that we get at conversion the feeling of the Holy Spirit to make us more and more like Jesus and to speak of him that's an ongoing thing and it's certainly something that all Christians should desire and sometimes as we are filled with the spirit well yes it could express itself in a kind of deep joy and intimacy with God or perhaps an unusual boldness and courage to speak about him or just a sense that God's truth has not just touched our head but our hearts but whether we have that specific feeling or not again the important thing is that we are being Christ shaped that's what being spirit filled is all about remember last week we said that the spirit is all about

Jesus and so that's the challenge I leave you with are you being influenced by the Holy Spirit towards Christ likeness well that's the mark of a mature spirit filled Christian a mature spirit filled Christian is not the person always chasing after the next emotional high or mystical experience always going from church to church looking for that specific experience indeed such a person might be profoundly unspiritual now the mature spirit filled person is the person who truly wants Jesus to be at home in him or her is that you let's pray heavenly father we pray now that as we have heard help us to be driven back to your word help us to submit to it we thank you that you are the one who has poured out the

Holy Spirit on us when we believe in Jesus we thank you for that one off unrepeatable experience we thank you so much that the Holy Spirit continues to dwell in us and indeed that we are to be continually filled with him so we ask this morning by your Holy Spirit empower us and feel us to live for you to love others to speak of you and to glorify Jesus in his name we pray amen