

Baptism of the Spirit

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Integration Question: *What is the balance between the inaugural and the ongoing work of Spirit in a believer? How do you define baptism in/ with/by the Holy Spirit?*

Theological Statement

The inaugural work of Holy Spirit is the renewed life and unending presence of God in all who believe. Known as being baptized by the Spirit, Holy Spirit unites our lives to Jesus' atoning death on the cross and new resurrection life which circumcises, cleanses, and renews our hearts, just like the prophets of old foretold (Jer. 31:33-34; Joel 2:28-29; Ezek. 36:26-37). This is best illustrated in the Day of Pentecost, when Holy Spirit came upon all Jews who believed (and likewise, upon all gentiles who believed- Acts 10). The biblical authors depicted this scene in terms of fire. In Acts 2:1-3, Luke records that "When the day of Pentecost came, [the disciples] were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit." His imagery of fire and Holy Spirit is paramount for understanding what it means for humans to be united with Christ.

Throughout Scripture, the resting of fire was the most common way the Old Testament communicated God's dwelling presence. God is described as a smoking firepot and blazing torch when he solidified His covenant with Abraham and passed between the split animals (Genesis 15:17). God revealed himself to Moses through a burning bush (Exodus 3:2-4). God led the Israelite nation in the wilderness through pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21). God met Moses and the Israelites again on Mount Sinai by descending on it in fire (Exodus 19:17-18). God met and protected Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fire of a blazing furnace (Daniel 3:25-26). Story after story, God came down to meet His people through fire. But the most prevalent

imagery of God's fiery presence is in terms of the tabernacle and temple. The author of Numbers reminds the reader that God's presence covered the tabernacle in "the appearance of fire" (Numbers 9:15-23), and after King Solomon finished building the temple "the Israelites saw the fire come down from heaven and the Glory of the Lord on the Temple" (2 Chronicles 7:1-3). It is with this imagery the New Testament authors designated the Spirit as the renewed presence of God on His people. The profound theological truth is that, through Holy Spirit, Christ followers have now become the cleansed and renewed dwelling place of God- His new temple. Paul picks up on this realization and reminds the church in Corinth they are the new temple of God, His dwelling place, because His Spirit lives in them (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

The ongoing work of Holy Spirit, also called being baptized in the Spirit, is the empowerment for ministry. In other words, the Holy Spirit enables Christians to live out the life of Jesus. Paul gives us some of these characteristics, what we call "fruits of the Spirit" in Galatians 5. Scripture also gives us depictions of more outbursts of empowerments. These empowerments are what most people call spiritual gifts. Whether they are present for a person's whole life or come at specific times, like volcanic eruptions, Holy Spirit continues to work in and through God's people to continue to advance God's kingdom. A great example of this is depicted in Acts 4 as the disciples pray for Holy Spirit to work through them. They pray, "'Grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:29-31). After the inaugural work of Holy Spirit, the disciples still prayed for His continued work in their lives, specifically in this passage, to speak and teach His truth with boldness, and for miraculous healings, signs and

wonders to be performed through them. Scripture reassures followers of Jesus that the same power that raised Jesus from the grave lives in them and they too can take part in advancing God's presence and kingdom on earth.

Ministry Application

Practically, being filled with Holy Spirit means cultivating a life of discipleship by learning to discern, hear, and be moved by Him. All Christians must walk as agents, ambassadors, of Jesus advancing God's kingdom on here on earth. Acts tells stories upon stories where disciples of Jesus were guided and influenced by God's Spirit. What Jesus promised in Luke 12:11-12 is now a reality for us because of Holy Spirit. As a result, all Christ followers can (and must) boldly proclaim His good news, taking confidence that Holy Spirit speaks through us, as well as opens the heart and ears of the listener. Similarly, Holy Spirit continues to unveil the same power of Jesus in the lives of His followers, including healing the sick, lame, and dead. This means that Christians can (and must) be the conduit of miracles because Holy Spirit offers healing to His creation through us. Believers are to fulfill Jesus' great commission, through Holy Spirit as each person is encouraged to take, live, and share His story, through word and power wherever they go- to the workplace, to school, at home with children, to the gas station, to the coffee shop, to the local park, and to the "ends of the earth"- because God's life giving, new creation forming, witness emboldening, and power manifesting Spirit dwells in them.

Another aspect, that will better allow Christians to discern, hear, and be moved more by Holy Spirit is for them to live in the truth that the inaugural work of Holy Spirit really did redeem and free them from the slavery of sin. So many Christians are more consumed with the power and stronghold of sin that it paralyzes them from living as renewed image bearers.

Romans 6 is a powerful chapter to accept and let restore our understanding of what it means to

really be a Christian, one who is in Christ. There are many followers of Jesus who still identify their identity as Isaiah's filthy rags (Is. 64:6) rather than a brand-new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Every Christian, whether new or "mature", must understand and live in the new identity and reality of what it means to be united with Jesus. All Christian living must be done under the new banner of redeemed and Holy Spirit indwelt heirs of the King. By living into our new identity, we will be more mindful of the reality that Holy Spirit is empowering us to speak His truth more boldly and share His miraculous works to others.