

A Biblical Theology of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

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Abstract

This article will discuss the issue of the baptism of the Holy Spirit: what it is, how is it manifested, and what are its fruits. In the introduction, the problem and the questions pertaining to the Holy Spirit baptism are stated together with the thesis that will be tested. The thesis is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit biblically understood is a unique and unrepeatable event universal to all Christians, which happens instantaneously with salvation (when the believer is placed in Christ and joined to his body) and that this baptism is not marked by any immediate and special outward sign. First, this article will present different views on the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism with historical developments of the views. Then it will deal with biblical data, focusing on all major passages. Special attention will be given to the Book of Acts, and “the second blessing” theology, which is the crux of the doctrine. Then the relation of hermeneutics and experience will also be discussed. Finally, the conclusion and the practical implications of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and biblical admonishments for the Christian life will be given.

Key words: *Holy Spirit baptism (baptism in the Holy Spirit), filling with the Spirit, Promise of the Father, delayed blessing, second blessing, subsequence*

“He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Mt. 3:11)¹

Is there a “second blessing” subsequent to salvation? If there is, is it to be called and equated to Holy Spirit baptism? And what is baptism in the Holy Spirit after

1 Unless stated otherwise, in this article the author will use ESV translation of the Bible.

all? This article will show, based on biblical evidence, that Holy Spirit baptism is biblically best understood as a unique and unrepeatable event universal to all Christians, which happens instantaneously with salvation (when the believer is placed in Christ and joined to his body) and that this baptism is not necessarily marked by any immediate and special outward sign.

First, this article will present different views on the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism with historical developments of the views. Then it will deal with biblical data, focusing on all major passages. Special attention will be given to the Book of Acts, and “the second blessing” theology, which is the crux of the doctrine. The relation of hermeneutics and experience will also be discussed. Finally, the practical implications of Holy Spirit baptism and biblical admonishments for the Christian life will be given.

Different Views and Their History

Before the Pentecostal revival in the beginning of the twentieth century, the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism was neither prominent nor discussed with any regularity in the church. But after the beginning of twentieth century, especially after the happenings at the Azusa Street Church, the experience described and called by this doctrine greatly affected the modern church. The experience of Holy Spirit baptism, followed with “tongues” rapidly spread throughout different denominations causing excitement, debates, and even turmoil. Today, there are several interpretations of what actually happened during this “second Pentecost” and based on understandings of that event, different views of the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism have been developed.

There are several major views on this controversial doctrine, and there are additional splits/nuances within each view. Major views can be divided on Catholic and Protestant. Since this doctrine was not as developed (and did not have such a strong influence) in the Eastern Orthodox Church, its evaluation will not be considered in this article. Major divisions among Protestants exist between sacramental (Anglican, Lutheran and Presbyterian circles) and non-sacramental views (Medved 2015, 177). Since this doctrine was brought forth by the development of Pentecostal teachings and the denominations itself, it can also, within Protestantism, be divided into three major streams: Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic (Cheung 1996, 115). Some authors also see five major different views: Catholic, Reformed, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, and Charismatic (Brand 2004, 2). This broader division of views is in chronological order according to the historical development of the different views, and will be used to present some specifics of each understanding.

The classical Catholic view is the sacramental view in which salvation and justification are understood as intertwined and progressive sacramental processes.

Both are initially received through the first-time participation in the sacraments, and later, they grow in the life of the believer through the grace which is imparted by further participation in the sacraments (Horton 2004, 102). Considering the theological position of the Catholic Charismatic renewal (which started in the sixties of the last century), they are not hesitant to admit that they have received classical Pentecostal doctrine. Since they “already distinguish the work of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, the question for them is not subsequence *per se*, but ‘how subsequence as a new experience of the Spirit could be integrated into the church’s sacramental economy’” (Horton 2004, 102). For Catholic Charismatic theology, “the initiatory outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer holds true and is to be distinguished from both baptism/conversion and subsequent infillings and anointings with the Spirit” (Horton 2004, 103). So, for Catholics, the debate has been “whether Spirit baptism is a release of sacramental grace or a new experience apart from the sacraments” (Horton 2004, 102).

Until the Reformation, the classical Catholic sacramental view of baptism in /with the Holy Spirit was practically unchallenged. However, with launch of the Reformation, the understanding of salvation and justification began changing and the importance of the sacraments (together with their number) as the means of receiving grace was diminished. Early Protestant denominations saw salvation as instantaneous and complete in the moment the person believed, while sanctification became something that is to be achieved progressively. Baptism in the Holy Spirit, as Del Colle concludes, was not and would not have even been discussed without today’s “classical Pentecostal witness to it” (Horton 2004, 101). So, based on the current response to that doctrine, the typical Reformed position, as Kaiser states, is that “the baptism in the Spirit is received at the time of one’s conversion” (2004, 16).

To understand the emergence of the classical Pentecostal doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism, one needs to go back to the eighteenth-century beginnings of Wesleyanism, or Christian perfectionism. “Wesley came to understand his central mission to be to restore the biblical balance between justification and sanctification, a balance that had been skewed toward sanctification by the Catholic tradition and toward justification by the Protestant” (Dunning 2004, 182). Wesley’s view of the work of the Holy Spirit was primarily correlated to sanctification, and for him, grace had a two-fold meaning. One was unmerited grace and the second was transforming power (Dunning 2004, 186). This transforming sanctifying power was considered by Wesley as a “second blessing,” though he did not call it Holy Spirit baptism. His associate, Fletcher, is the one who used the term more often, though he did not equate entire sanctification with it (Dunning 2004, 199). The nineteenth century Holiness movement did just that. Holiness believers equated the entire sanctification process with the baptism in the Holy Spirit and used “Pentecost as

the paradigm for this ‘second work of grace’” (Dunning 2004, 199).

Crucial theological development took place after the Wesleyan traditional emphasis on “perfection” was merged with the theme of “power.” Phoebe Palmer equated the two, suggesting that “holiness is power” (Dayton 1987, 94). Out of the Holiness movement and a deeper interest in the Holy Spirit, the Pentecostal revival, also known as the First Wave, broke out. This experience was explained in terms now known as Classical Pentecostalism. This movement espouses three main traits: Baptism of the Holy Spirit is primarily empowerment for Christian service. This experience is subsequent to salvation, and its initial sign is speaking with other tongues (Loder 2002, 75–76).

Out of this view, during the second part of twentieth century, emerged the Charismatic view (second wave) of Holy Spirit baptism. There are a variety of sub-views considering subsequence and tongues, as is also characteristic in the “third wave.” For the “third wave” (emphasis on reestablishing the offices of apostles and prophets), the common factor considering Spirit baptism is manifestations of the signs and wonders, especially gifts of the Holy Spirit, as listed in 1 Corinthians 12.

Analysis of Biblical Passages Crucial for the Doctrine

There are only seven verses in Scripture where Holy Spirit baptism is explicitly mentioned. All of those instances are in the New Testament (Mt. 3:11, Mk. 1:8, Lk. 3:16, Jn. 1:33, Acts 1:5, 11:16 and 1. Cor. 12:13), and all are in the verb form “baptize in/with the Holy Spirit,” as opposed to a noun form, “Spirit baptism,” which was developed as a term in modern times to describe the experience (Medved 2015, 173). It is mentioned four times in the Gospels, two times in the book of Acts, and once in 1 Corinthians. In six instances (all except Mark) the same word is used, the Greek preposition “*en*.” Mark omits the preposition, “but there is no difference in meaning, because a dative noun alone can take the same sense as the preposition *en* plus the dative noun” (Grudem 2000, 767). This preposition can be translated as “of, in, with or by.” The first six times it is mentioned (in the Gospels and Acts), it is in comparison to water baptism by John, and almost always translated as “in or with.” But most modern translations, in 1 Corinthians 12:13 translate it as “*by*,” (Grudem 2000, 768) and for proponents of “second blessing theology” the last part of this verse has a completely different meaning than in the other six instances.

Holy Spirit Baptism in the Old Testament

When we come to the Old Testament, we encounter one problem. Namely, how can one speak about Spirit baptism in the Old Testament, when the phrase is not

even mentioned there? Here one needs to apply some of the hermeneutical tools which are on disposal for interpretation and understanding of the Scriptures. For Christians, progressive revelation, belief that God revealed himself progressively in the Scriptures, would be of much use here. Put in another words, it is belief that in the Old Testament the New Testament is concealed, while in the New Testament, the Old Testament is revealed. This interpretation can clearly be seen and confirmed by words of Jesus in many places in the New Testament. When Jesus himself speaks of baptism in the Holy Spirit, He said to his disciples: “wait for the promise of the Father . . . for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:4-5).

Jesus’ explicit reference to the “promise of the Father” infers that the promise had to be given earlier, presumably in the Old Testament. For those who would reject this premise, saying that it could relate to the promise of Jesus’s own words given in the New Testament, the apostle Peter gives undisputable evidence in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:16-18. Here Peter explains that what was happening at Pentecost was at least partial (or initial) fulfillment of the prophecy about the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit given by the prophet Joel in Joel 2. Here one can see that what was said explicitly in New Testament can be found at least implicitly stated in the Old Testament. With a New Testament understanding of Holy Spirit baptism (as it will be shown) it is easy to see the connection between the Old Testament passages. Moses cried out in the book of Numbers, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!” (Num. 11:29). That this was not just his desire, but the desire of God’s very heart, is clearly seen in Joel 2, Ezekiel 36, and Jerimiah 31. The promise, the gift, and the Spirit all relate to the same thing — the New Covenant promised by God the Father, and established by the Messiah, God the Son.

Holy Spirit Baptism in the Gospel Accounts

As already mentioned, Holy Spirit baptism is mentioned in all four Gospels: Matthew 3:11-12, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16-17, and John 1:33. John the Baptist makes the proclamation and Matthew and Luke add the expression that the Messiah is going to baptize, not just with the Holy Spirit, but with fire also. This baptism with fire is often connected with judgment, since that is what fire often represents in the Old Testament (Kaiser 2004, 300).² That this should not refer to a separate baptism but can refer to fiery tongues of Holy Spirit baptism, can be concluded from the Pentecost event. Considering the Gospel accounts, it is also important

2 But that is not exclusive, because fire can also have cleansing effect, as in Isaiah 4:4.

to notice that “the verb in all four Gospels is active with Christ as the subject” (Kaiser 2004, 20).

John 20:21-22, also known as the “Johannite Pentecost,” is first place where significant differences between the interpretations occur. For Williams (1990, 2:174), this is the time and place where the disciples were born of the Spirit. Arrington (1981, 5) agrees, by saying that the assumption that the disciples were unregenerate before Pentecost is “forced exegesis.” So, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came on the disciples as an already “newborn community of believers” (Williams 1990, 2:174). Though this is the interpretation of all classical Pentecostals and some Charismatics, there are certain problems with this interpretation of subsequence and the Holy Spirit baptism as the “second blessing.” This author sees more convincing way of putting the pieces of the puzzles of Scriptures together. Instead of the “second blessing,” by introducing the key concept of “delayed blessing,” the big picture put together looks much clearer.

At first, Grudem’s proposal that the “Johannite Pentecost,” was “acted out prophecy” sounds slightly off, but being aware of John 7:38-39³ makes this proposal very legitimate. This passage (v. 39) also points to a certain time span; “those who *believed* in him *were to receive* [*The Holy Spirit*].” Instead, calling it subsequence, this time span can be more rightly named *delay*, and this will play an important role in interpreting the Book of Acts. There is also another clue which reveals that New Testament salvation and the gospel of grace could also be at stake here. It is the word “believed.” This picture fits perfectly with what is described in Acts 2 at the day of Pentecost. Those who believed in him (disciples) now have received the Holy Spirit and have entered into the New Testament experience of salvation, becoming the body of Christ, the church.⁴

Holy Spirit Baptism in the Book of Acts

To understand the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism, an understanding of the context of the Book of Acts is crucial. And how one understands the Book of Acts depends on one’s hermeneutical approach. While there is general consensus and recognition among the proponents of the grammatical-historical method that the Book Acts is a historical narrative, how to apply that certain genre is the

3 “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

4 If Jesus’ glorification (Jn. 7:39) relates just to him having a resurrected, glorified body, and the giving of the Spirit in John 20:22 is the fulfilment of John 7, then what is there left to be fulfilled at the day of Pentecost. But Peter states that the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, is received and poured out by the ascended Christ who is “exalted at the right hand of God” (Acts 2:33).

crux of the debate among Evangelicals and Classical Pentecostals.⁵ Is the Book of Acts prescriptive or “merely” descriptive? Is there a theology to be drawn out of the historical narrative, or can only didactic parts of the Scripture (the epistles) be used for that? How distinct and different is Lukan pneumatology from Paul’s (Dunn 1993, 27)?

The day of Pentecost described in Acts 2 considers the Holy Spirit’s outpouring a crucial event in the New Testament epoch (Dunn 1993, 16). In this article, a part of the foundation for this event was already laid out: God the Father promised His Spirit in the Old Testament. In the beginning of the New Testament, John the Baptist identified Jesus as the one who baptizes in the Spirit. And Luke, author of the Book of Acts, repeats that again in the beginning of his book, in Acts 1:4-5: the promise of the Father is to be baptized with or in the Holy Spirit. The consequences of that will be: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This verse is programmatic for the whole book, because Luke lays out the structure of the whole book according to this verse. By a careful reading of the Acts, one can see that the promise, the baptism in/with the Holy Spirit, and empowerment for the ministry are part of that same gift (Unger 1944, 242).

The Acts 2 Jerusalem Pentecost

Though the term “Holy Spirit baptism” is not used explicitly in the Acts 2:1-4 passage, it is evident that the day of Pentecost was a fulfilment of the long-awaited “promise of the Father.” They (the 120 disciples) were “all filled with the Holy Spirit” (v. 4) as a sign that the Spirit promised by the prophet Joel has been poured out on all flesh (v. 17). This was an exact consequence of the Messiah’s exultation “at the right hand of God,” as he “received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,” which he has poured out (v. 33). Peter urged everyone to repent and be baptized, in the Messiah’s name, for the forgiveness of sins, so they could also “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38). “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (v. 39).

If one’s understanding of this event is only as empowering for ministry and only subsequent to salvation, then a lot of new questions are raised. When did then the church start, if not on Pentecost? If the New Covenant was established at the Last Supper, when was it ratified? And by what signs? Following this understanding, one would really need to neglect the salvific workings of the Holy Spirit, because all those promises would then relate to empowerment. It is not

5 Classical Pentecostals are also known as “the First Wave.”

just the question of emphasis of Luke's pneumatology versus Paul's, but what is at the center of the gospel! And if that is empowerment, for sure it is not separated from salvation. Rather, this account represents disciples entering into the fullness of the New Testament salvation that they were waiting for (Jn. 7:39).

The Acts 8-Samaritan Pentecost

According to the program given in Acts 1:8, the gospel made its first breakthrough outside of Jewish borders. In Samaria, Phillip proclaimed Christ which was followed with signs, exorcisms, and healings, "When they believed Philip as he preached the Good News about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). Peter and John were sent there to pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit because they had not received him yet.⁶

Since there is no apparent reason to doubt the legitimacy of their faith, (Samaria had received the word of God in Acts 8:14) for classical Pentecostals, this passage is firm evidence for "second blessing" theology. In their understanding, Samaritans were saved when they believed, and now subsequent to their salvation, they were baptized by the Holy Spirit. But one needs to ask oneself, what was the reason that Luke, the author, describes this event as he does? Does he want to point the reader to a subsequence of the event to the salvation, to establish the "second blessing" pattern? Or, is he describing the situation as an anomaly? It is impossible to determine this without looking at the context, both historically and literarily. Understanding the history of the animosity between Samaritans and Jews gives credible reasons for God to withhold the giving of the Spirit to Samaritans. Maybe God especially wanted to confirm that Samaritans are also called (Acts 2:39) and added to their number (Acts 2:47)? By giving the Holy Spirit to Samaritans through the laying on of hands of the Jewish Apostles from Jerusalem, he accomplished a two-fold purpose. He showed the Samaritans where the true Temple is, from which the Spirit and the truth come (John chapter 4), namely Jerusalem. Also, he showed the apostles that "Samaritan dogs" have received the Holy Spirit, by confirming it visibly (Acts 8:18), and that they are now brothers by faith. This interpretation of a unique time in the history of salvation is additionally confirmed from the context that follows. Instead of describing this event (Holy Spirit baptism) as something subsequent to the salvation of the Samaritans, the apostle Peter ties it together with salvation and the gospel of grace, by calling this receiving of the Holy Spirit "the gift of God" (Acts 8:20).

6 "Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17).

Acts 9-Saul's (Paul's) Conversion

The conversion of the apostle Paul (Saul) in Acts 9 is another place in the Scripture, where delayed (not subsequence) receiving of the Holy Spirit is recorded. Since it can be concluded logically from the text that the Damascus road experience (vv. 3-8.) is the time and place when Paul first believed in Jesus, how is one then to understand Ananias laying his hands on him to “be filled with the Holy Spirit” (v. 17)? Is this evidence for subsequence between Saul’s salvation and baptism in the Holy Spirit? Proponents of that view find confirmation in the additional fact that even Ananias refers to him as “brother Saul” (v. 17). But since the Book of Acts is describing a unique time in salvation history, another, less doctrinally problematic explanation is possible and also probable. Since Saul was, up until now, persecuting the church, for sure it was not a small thing for him to be accepted in the community of faith.⁷ Even the devout Ananias was reluctant to obey the direct instruction of the risen Lord to go to Saul and lay his hands on him (vv. 10-16). In that way, just like with the Samaritans, prejudices have to be broken so the body of Christ could continue to grow and “to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

Acts 10-The Gentile Pentecost

The breakthrough of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, according to the program given at the beginning of the Book of Acts (1:8) is not limited just to geography. For sure, as one can see in several other places (Acts 2:39; 9:15; 10:28), “to the ends of the earth” can relate also to crossing national and racial borders. That is exactly what Luke describes as the Gospel reaches the Gentiles in Acts 10. No matter how right Cornelius’s standing was before God (vv. 2, 22, 31, 34), he was still in need of hearing the message by which he and his household were to be saved (v. 14.). Peter shared with them about Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection (vv. 37-42). While Peter was still sharing the Gospel and “how everyone who believes in him [Jesus] receives forgiveness of sins through his name,” (v. 43) he was interrupted by the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word,” (v. 44) and all the circumcised believers were amazed “because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles” (v. 45). When Peter confirmed that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit just as they (the apostles and disciples on the day of Pentecost) did (v. 47 and 11:15) was he confirming and establishing that Holy Spirit baptism was subsequent to salvation?” Even if someone can discuss reasons for “delayed” Holy Spirit baptism in Acts 2 and 8, here, there is not even a hint of delay in the text. Quite the opposite, Luke firmly

7 “And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple” (Acts 9:26).

establishes the “first blessing.” Gentiles received the word of God (11:1) and God granted them repentance that leads to life (11:18). And once again, Peter remembered that that was exactly what happened to them on the day of Pentecost.⁸

This falling of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles he equated with the filling on the day of Pentecost, and both events were equated with Jesus’s promise of being baptized with the Holy Spirit. This is the gift that God gives *when* you believe. What other blessing can be described here if not the gospel and salvation?

Acts 19-The Ephesian Disciples

There are two hurdles to cross to arrive at the interpretation of this passage. The first one is Luke’s calling the twelve men *mathētas* “disciples.” Some used the unambiguity of this term “disciples” as referring to saved men, and then their reception of the Holy Spirit as a “second blessing” experience. From the context of the story, it is clear that Paul is dealing with disciples of John the Baptist here. “The fact that this is the only account of rebaptism in the NT suggests that the Ephesian ‘disciples’ were a unique case” (Loder 2002, 85).

A second point of intrigue in this passage is Paul’s question: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (Acts 19:2) There is a debate how to translate the aorist verb *elabete* and its participle *pisteusantes*. Unger (1944a, 491) says connecting them with *when* is much better option than *since* because they express one “simultaneous action.”⁹ Some have suggested that Paul saw that something was wrong with their faith. And their answer, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (v. 2) confirms that indeed something was wrong. Another reason for the question could be that Paul was aware of the possibility of a delayed reception of the Holy Spirit for those who did believe, based on his own experience of salvation in Acts 9 and those of the Samaritans in Acts 8. When Paul explained to them that John was telling people to believe in Jesus (v. 4), they submitted themselves to baptism in Jesus’ name (v. 5), to express their belief in him. It is interesting that he then does the same thing that was done in two previously mentioned accounts: he laid his hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

What is Luke communicating here? This encounter of Paul with the Ephesian

8 “The Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” (Acts 11:15-17).

9 Since this syntactical construction (perfective adverbial participles) is very flexible, and the context does not help resolve the ambiguity, it is left to the theological convictions to determine how to translate the construction.

10 “And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying” (Acts 19:6).

“disciples” is significant and quite intriguing in several ways. Though Ephesus was not “the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8) or even the end of known territories, at least it is outside the borders of Israel. That could be the reason why Luke records this event that happened many years after the Day of Pentecost. The reason that Ferguson gives fits even better: “Like the first disciples at Pentecost, many of whom had also received John’s baptism, these twelve men were thus in transit from the era of expectation to that of fulfillment” (Loder 2002, 85–86).

Acts - Summary

First, there is no doubt that Luke was not just a physician, but a historian and a theologian. Though in his works, Luke and Acts, he emphasizes the ministries (doing, empowerment) of the Holy Spirit, he is not totally separate and distinct from Pauline pneumatology. He does refer to salvific workings of the Spirit just as Paul deals with charismatic manifestations of the Spirit. Though his explanation of the salvific work of the Spirit is his major focus (Dunn 1993, 27).

Second, if Luke by recording Acts, wanted to establish a clear pattern for receiving the Holy Spirit and give theological evidence for subsequent Holy Spirit baptism, he did a very poor job. The table assembled by Loder¹¹ (2002, 87) shows that not one instance of all five recorded events was like the other.

Passage	Historical Situation	People Group	Sign(s)	Prayer	Laying on of Hands	Water Baptism
Acts 2	Pentecost, initial outpouring of the Spirit	Jewish disciples of Jesus	sound of wind, tongues of fire, tongues & praise	yes	no	no
Acts 8	Advancement of Gospel to the Samaritans	Samaritan “believers”	none mentioned	yes	yes	yes, before reception of the Spirit
Acts 9	Paul’s conversion	Saul/Paul	none mentioned	yes	yes	yes, after receiving sight
Acts 10	Advancement of Gospel to the Gentiles	God-fearing Gentiles	Tongues and Praise	no	no	yes, after reception of the Spirit
Acts 19	Fulfillment John the Baptist’s ministry	“Disciples” of John	Tongues and Prophecy	no	yes	yes, after reception of the Spirit

11 Though in the case of Acts 8, there are no signs explicitly mentioned, one can infer from the context that there were some visible manifestations present (Acts 8:18).

According to these five recorded events, there is no sufficient evidence to show that Luke in Acts wants to establish a clear teaching or hold up a normative experience for Christians, nor that those events are paradigmatic (Loder 2002, 88).

There is one more interesting thing to be seen throughout the Book of Acts, especially for the delay (not subsequence) that was evident in the case of Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit (salvation). In Matthew 16, upon Peter's proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus gives the keys of the Kingdom to Peter. Is it not interesting that God then really uses those keys (Peter), to open the Kingdom first to Jews (Acts 2), then to half-bred Samaritans (Acts 8), and finally to full-blooded Gentiles (Acts 10) (Unger 1944a, 488)?

Spirit Baptism in the Epistles

As it was already mentioned, there is only one explicit reference to Holy Spirit baptism in the epistles, in 1 Corinthians 12:13.¹² The translation of the Greek preposition "*en*" in the expression *en heni Pneumati* "in one Spirit" is at the core of the debate here. In six other verses mentioning Holy Spirit baptism, clearly Jesus is the agent who baptizes, and the Spirit is the element into which someone is baptized. In this instance, if the preposition *en* is translated "by," it means that the Holy Spirit is the agent. This option is defended by proponents of the "second blessing" theology. If that being the case, then this expression could be understood as baptism done by the Holy Spirit and something totally different from the baptism done by Jesus as mentioned in other six verses. The Evangelical interpretation of the preposition as *in* or *with* annulled the difference between those baptisms but leaves ambiguity because then unstated agent (Christ), baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit into his own body. Though the first interpretation ("by") does seem more coherent, it does not necessarily lead to the doctrine of subsequence, separated from salvation. It can mean different stages in the order of salvation (Grudem 2000, 670). As a believer is indwelt (regenerated) by the Holy Spirit who baptizes him in Christ (as a part of his body, the church), at the same time a believer is baptized by Christ in the Holy Spirit (John's promise), and indwelt by Christ, through the Holy Spirit (Unger 1944, 233–35). Even though union between God and man is an unexplainable mystery, the church still needs to strive to explain this mystery as clear and confusingly as is humanly possible.

12 "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

Hermeneutics Versus Signs and Experiences

Christianity is not just a set of doctrines to which we give mental ascent. It is also a religion of the heart. In the same way, we have been given the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Theology is the human attempt to codify both. That is, to a certain extent, possible, but there are limits, even with the Word of God. How much more is it impossible to do that with the workings of the Spirit of God? So how is one then to judge experiences attributed to the Spirit of God? By going to the Word of God and using proper hermeneutical interpretive tools that are available today. Then one can test his experience and see how and if it fits with the witness of the Word. And there is nothing wrong in trying to develop a system which is congruent with the rest of the Word, as long as one uses objective hermeneutical methods to do it. But if the subjective experience takes primacy, then one will use whatever it takes to try to justify it. This author understands that this is what has happened to the Classical Pentecostal doctrine. Trying to explain their experience, they have developed a doctrine which cannot be defended solely by Scripture. Though they claim to apply hermeneutical grammatical-historical method, their practice is different.¹³

And they are not the only ones who are guilty of that! The same mistake is done on the other side of the spectrum with those Christians who exalt the Word, at the expense of the workings of the Spirit. Because they have the Word, the cessationists deny not just the signs and gifts of the Holy Spirit, but even the church's desperate need for them. To explain why and how they do that is a topic for separate research. So, what is the solution to the debate, and is there even one at all?

Practical Doctrinal Implications and Scripture Admonishments

One of the workings of the Spirit is to bring the Body of Christ into the unity of the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). So, is there something wrong with the experience the Pentecostals have or was something wrong with the workings of the Spirit? Neither. There is another explanation, another way, a way of humbleness. For Pentecostals, that way is through reinterpreting the nature and purpose of their experience in a way that is in line with the whole witness of the Scripture, and theology that is deducted from it in an objective way. But instead of that, Ervin (1987, 59) is rather willing to do some hermeneutical gymnastics with Ephesians 5:18 to come to *his* preferable conclusion defending one baptism and one filing:

13 That is Loder's conclusion in his well-written thesis work "An Examination of the Classical Pentecostal Doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: In Light of the Pentecostal Position on Sources of Theology."

“Since the continuous (durative) idea is grammatically and contextually preferable to the iterative (repeated) sense of the verb *be filled*, it follows that this passage does not teach repeated fillings with the Holy Spirit.”

Drawing a theological line between salvation and Holy Spirit baptism creates a serious theological problem which also leads to exclusivism and spiritual pride. If the line is drawn between the Spirit baptism and fillings with the Spirit, the theological problem is gone, and together with it the rest of its implications should go away as well.

One Holy Spirit baptism, many fillings (blessings), is the pattern that fits the whole Scripture more closely. Or as Unger (1944, 239) states it: “The Baptism with the Spirit is a once-and-for-all operation, whereas the filling with the Spirit is a continuous process.” The first one is happening at salvation, without some special outward signs of confirmation. That event can or may not be followed immediately by a filling of the Spirit. This is where the manifestations and variety of gifting which the Spirit gives as desires are signifying that there was a filling experience happening.

On the other side, considering Evangelicals and other Christians who are drawn more towards the intellectual aspects of Christian faith, the call to humility has a different connotations, but is no less applicable. Though majority will readily agree that just mental ascent to the prepositions and doctrines of faith is not enough, it is questionable how many will readily follow the admonishment from the Scripture to yearn for the experience and the manifestations of the gifts. And since Scripture admonishes believers to be continually or repeatedly (iterative) filled (Eph. 5:18), neither those who once had the experience but have interpreted it wrongly, nor those who had the proper doctrine about it but have not experienced it have reasons to be proud. Then, all can and need to acknowledge that they continually need his power and they then will be truly led by the Spirit into the unity that Christ was praying about.

Conclusion

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an important, complex, and a much debated doctrine. It is important because it affects one’s view of salvation (*ordo salutis*), sanctification (viewed as first, second, or even third blessing) and understanding of the normal Christian walk and experience. As Paul says it, if we do not receive the Spirit solely by faith, then even the gospel of grace itself is at stake.¹⁴ It is com-

14 “Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?” (Gal. 3:2).

plex because it involves and challenges one's understanding of the correlation of the two Testaments (continuity/discontinuity), understanding of the church (its nature and beginning), and hermeneutics in general (especially one's understanding of the genres of historical narrative).

By combining all those understandings and examining the biblical data by putting the events in their proper historico-salvific context, this research has shown that the following thesis stands: understanding Holy Spirit baptism as an unrepeatable event closely knit to one's salvation is the only way to do justice to the gospel of grace. The witness of the Old Testament, together with the witness of the New Testament has proven that. Even the key passages that have been used by proponents of the "second blessing" theology (Acts accounts), upon scrupulous scrutiny, give their voice to that truth.

The secondary aim of this article was to try bringing closer those who came from different traditions and camps, but belong to the same family of faith. The author of this article has experienced life on both sides of the pendulum (charismatic/Pentecostal and traditional evangelical). He has lived among Christians who emphasize experience (and the workings of the Spirit of God), and those who emphasize intellectual and doctrinal aspects of our faith (the Word of God). He has seen unfortunate things and had the bad experiences of which opposite camps accuse one another, but he has also seen good things and had good experiences in both camps that were really beneficial for his Christian life and walk. If those good and positive aspects are brought together, and both Word and Spirit are given their proper place in their lives, then the body of Christ will grow "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

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