

What is baptism in the Holy Spirit

I think there is a lot of confusion related to terminology when it comes to discussing this subject. I don't think that defining the baptism in the Holy Spirit involves whether or not spiritual gifts are present in the church today or whether or not speaking in tongues is involved. I also believe that as far as possible we should form our definitions from Scripture rather than by personal experience. That is why there is so much disagreement and confusion because of the fact that people's experiences can and do differ.

In verses such as Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33 and Acts 1:5, John is said to have baptized in water but Jesus Christ would baptize in the Holy Spirit. In the passage in Acts, the Christians are told that this will take place "not many days from now." Within a few days, of course, the day of Pentecost arrived with the sound of wind, the flames of fire and the speaking in tongues.

But the question remains. "What is the baptism in the Spirit?"

I think the biblical answer is given in I Corinthians 12:13. "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." This verse uses the same terminology (in one Spirit we were baptized) as the other verses from the Gospels and Acts. This passage is in the context of the body of Christ having many members with many gifts composing but one body.

I take it then that every person who is a Christian and part of the body of Christ has been baptized in one Spirit into one body. I would suggest therefore that the baptism in the spirit is the operation of the Spirit of God that places us into the body of Christ.

I would like to pass along a suggestion that someone gave to me a long time ago with reference to understanding baptism, especially spirit baptism. That suggestion is to look at the prepositions the original language uses in describing baptism. Just to get you started, let me explain that there are basically three: in (en), into (eis) and upon (epi). The problem with English is that sometimes these are translated in a way that makes it impossible to tell them apart.

In Matthew 3:11, John says I baptize you in water into repentance, but He will baptize in the Spirit.

Matthew 28:19 describes baptizing into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So right there, between those two verses you have two different things that a person could be baptized into.

Acts 2:38 talks about being baptized upon the name of Christ into forgiveness. So the object of "into" is different from the other two and what looks like a similarity to Matthew 28:19 (i.e. being baptized in the name of Christ) is really different. One is a baptism into the name and the other is a baptism upon the name.

Some very interesting patterns emerge when you look at what people are baptized in and what they are baptized into. It clears up a lot of ambiguity on the subject, but it does take some digging using a good interlinear Greek New Testament.

Perhaps looking at the attached table of how various prepositions are used with the word "baptism" would be helpful. Notice the similarity between John's baptism and the baptism Peter spoke about in Acts 2:38. John's baptism is into repentance whereas Jesus baptism in the Spirit is into Christ or the body of Christ.

Baptism					
(Comparison of 3 different baptisms based on the prepositions)					
Look for John's, Christian, and Spirit Baptisms					
Reference	Who	en (in)	eis (into; action)	epi (upon)	Misc. message
Matt 3:6	John	Jordan			repent, kingdom
Matt 3:11	John	water	repentance		
	Jesus	Holy Spirit			
Matt 28:19	command		name of father, etc.		
Mark 1:4	John		forgiveness		repent
Mark 1:5	John	Jordan			confess
Mark 1:8	John	water			
	Jesus	Holy Spirit			
Luke 3:3	John		forgiveness		repent
Luke 3:16	Jesus	H.S. and Fire			
John 1:25, 26	John	water			
John 1:33	Jesus	Spirit			
Acts 1:5	John	water			
	Jesus	Spirit			
Acts 2:38	Peter		forgiveness	Name of Jesus	repent
Acts 10:47	Cornelius	name of Jesus			
Acts 11:16	John	water			
	Jesus	Holy Spirit			
Acts 13:24	John				repentance
Acts 19:1-5	Corinthians	John's			repentance
			name of Jesus		
Romans 6:3	whoever		Jesus Christ		
			Christ's death		
I Cor. 1:13	not		name of Paul		
I Cor 10:2	Israel	cloud & sea	Moses		
I Cor 12:13		Spirit	body of Christ		
Gal 3:27	as many		Christ		

