



This ebooklet explores three of the five baptisms found in the Bible: the baptism of regeneration; water baptism, and baptism with the Holy Spirit. The purpose of each of these distinct baptisms is discussed and applied to the life of the believer. Do you have questions about baptism? Have you wondered what comes after salvation? You will find answers here.

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# Understanding Baptisms

By Sam Bowman

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# Understanding the Different Baptisms

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*Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instructions about washings (baptisms), and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits. Hebrews 6:1-3*

In recent years there has been much misunderstanding about what the baptism with the Holy Spirit really means. My goal in the following teaching is to clearly define this work of God by using the Holy Scriptures.

To begin with, baptism is one of the elementary teachings of the New Testament (NT) mentioned in Hebrews 6:2. Baptism is simply another word for washing or immersion. There are five baptisms mentioned in the NT:

1. The baptism of repentance performed by John the Baptist (Mark 1:4; Acts 18:25; 19:3)
2. A baptism of suffering (Mark 10:38-39; I Corinthians 15:29-31)
3. Baptism into the body of Christ (Regeneration)
4. Baptism with water
5. Baptism with the Holy Spirit

The first two baptisms in the list above are given less space than the others in the NT. They are both important but not the focus of this teaching. My focus in this teaching is to explain the last three baptisms listed, but my emphasis is on the baptism with the Holy Spirit because of the confusion surrounding it.

## **I. Baptism into the Body of Christ (Regeneration)**

This is the first baptism experienced by a believer and is, by far, the most important baptism for any person to experience. Without it the baptism with water is

meaningless and the baptism with the Holy Spirit is impossible. This baptism is mentioned by name in I Corinthians 12:13 and referred to in Galatians 3:27 -28 and Ephesians 4:4-5. In these passages Paul is emphasizing that neither ethnicity nor race is a factor or prerequisite to entering into the body of Christ. Most of us call this baptism being saved, born again, regenerated or becoming a new creature in Christ. These are the four most common descriptions referring to the same experience of accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9). Most of us don't think of it as a baptism, but it is because it includes being immersed in the body of Christ.

So what happens when we are regenerated? When we welcome the Lord Jesus Christ, we are adopted into God's eternal blood-washed family. Our relationship with the Father is restored and fellowship with Him becomes possible without interference from unforgiven sin. The debt caused by sin is canceled and no longer has the power to keep us from attaching to the Father (Colossians 2:14).

This is the second birth that Christ refers to in John 3:5. We are born of the Spirit, birthed into God's family. From this point on, I'll refer to our experience of being born of the Spirit (our salvation experience) as our time of regeneration.

Regeneration is definitely a work of the Holy Spirit, and those who have experienced it know intuitively in their human spirits that God is in them through the presence of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11, 16). Jesus said "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). This suggests that the act of salvation directly affects the human spirit. It appears that before salvation our human spirit is separated or out of touch with the Holy Spirit. Simply put, the light of our spirit is darkened by sin (Proverbs 20:27). When we make Jesus our Lord our spirit is regenerated; the light is turned on as sin is removed. (See washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit in Titus 3:4-6).

Genesis 2:7 states that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and he became a living being. This is an Old Testament (OT) picture of NT regeneration. Living being may also be translated soul. In other words God breathed His life or spirit into

man. Another OT mention of this life-giving spirit is found in Ecclesiastes 12:7. “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

After the Lord breathed life into Adam we learn in Genesis 3 that man sinned and lost close fellowship with God. Man lost the spiritual intimacy he had with God when sin entered the world. We can gain an understanding of man’s degenerate condition by reading Ephesians 2:1-10 where mankind’s degeneration is described. How God restores our spiritual fellowship to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ, is also explained in that scripture passage. Jesus died and rose again so that we might have new life. In fact the Bible states that it is His resurrection that gives us new life (I Peter 1:3). The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead regenerates our human spirit (Romans 8:11). The regeneration of human spirits by the Holy Spirit became possible after Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and was not available to the OT saints.

Now recall that God breathed His life into man in the beginning. We see it happening again in the NT. Jesus breathed on His disciples on the night of His resurrection, saying “Receive the Holy Spirit” John 20:22. This was their regeneration. I believe regeneration takes place when we accept Jesus as our Lord (Romans 10:9-10). At that point in time our human spirit’s ability for intimacy with God is restored by the Holy Spirit. Volumes more can be written about the believer’s intimacy with God and how it all begins with regeneration. Our new life in Christ is truly the focus of the NT. But let’s move on to the believer’s baptism, an important baptism.

## **II. Water Baptism**

In the OT there is no record of water baptism as we see it practiced in the NT, but it can be noted that priests entering the tabernacle and temple were required to wash in a bronze laver or bronze metal sea as they entered (Exodus 30:17, 21; II Chronicles 4:6). This routine was required to make them acceptable to God prior to their priestly service in the temple. In the NT all believers are considered priests and have gained access to God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6). My understanding of NT water baptism is that an older respected Christian leader immerses

a new believer in a baptismal tank or a river. Some people use a bathtub, especially in countries where converting to Christianity is illegal. In water baptism man is the agent of immersion, whereas Christ is the agent during regeneration and Holy Spirit baptism.

To us, the priest's washing in OT times just appears to be a simple natural cleanup and in the NT water baptism appears to be just a rite of passage. Yet both washings have deeper meanings. The priest's washing serves as a copy or foreshadowing (see Types and Shadows in the next section) of water baptism yet to come. Water baptism's meaning to us will be explained more fully in the next few paragraphs. Although both the washing of the priests in the OT and water baptism in the NT appear to be only natural acts, they actually symbolize our need to be cleansed spiritually. The OT washing remains symbolic only, because without the sacrifice of Christ there is no lasting remission for sins. Water baptism for someone who has accepted Christ symbolizes more than the need for spiritual cleansing. It is a public testimony that the believer's heart has *been* cleansed through regeneration. (Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21)

I believe that water baptism is meant to be a believer's sincere declaration that the heart has been cleansed of sin through belief in Christ as Savior. It is an outward expression of an inner reality and is meant to be performed before other believing witnesses as a public testimony to that inward change. Believers submit to water baptism because we have embraced the truth in our hearts that Jesus' death and resurrection has cleansed sin and given us new life. Immersion symbolizes that we are dead to our old way of life – we are buried in Christ. Our resurrection from the water symbolizes that we have been raised with Him to a new way of life as well as symbolizing the coming resurrection when Christ returns. (Romans 6:3-7) Henceforth, I can confidently enter into the presence of God because I believe Jesus has cleared the way for me and provided me with a clean heart.

*Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the*

*likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Romans 6: 3-7*

Further evidence that water baptism is a symbolic act testifying to an inward change is found in Colossians 2. Before we go there, let's look at Genesis 17 where we will find God's command to Abraham about circumcision.

*This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. Genesis 17:10*

God commanded Abraham to circumcise all the men as an outward sign in their bodies that they were in covenant with God. Circumcision in the flesh creates tenderness. When we receive Christ our hearts are circumcised by the Holy Spirit, making them tender towards God. OT circumcision is an act that foreshadows the NT reality.

Water baptism replaces natural circumcision as proof before people that a covenant exists between a believer and God. When a person accepts Christ, an inward circumcision of the heart is performed by the hand of God. Water baptism is a believer's public testimony that he has a changed, or circumcised, heart.

*and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions ... Colossians 2:11-13*

*But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. Romans 2:29*

Only Jesus can save someone. The baptism of regeneration is a completely supernatural experience. On the other hand, water baptism is performed by a believer on behalf of another believer making it essentially a natural, human experience that both testifies to and symbolizes the changes that have taken place as a result of regeneration.

Even though Jesus was God, as well as man, He did not begin His earthly ministry until after He was baptized in water by John. At that time, the Holy Spirit came upon Him. (Luke 3:21-22) Jesus did not need to be born again. He had no need for regeneration, but by submitting to water baptism and openly receiving the Holy Spirit He set a precedent for His followers to do the same.

### **III. Baptism with the Holy Spirit**

Even though I believe that regeneration, or the baptism into the body of Christ, is the most important baptism, vital because it is our salvation experience, my emphasis in this teaching is on the baptism with the Holy Spirit, because I have found that it is the most misunderstood of these three baptisms.

#### **Types and Shadows**

The term *Type and Shadow* is found in Hebrews 8:5 and the term *Shadow* is found in Colossians 2:17. (*Type is translated copy in some versions of the Bible*). A Type and Shadow is an OT person, object or event that foreshadows a person, object or event in the NT. The person, object or event in the NT is the fulfillment of the OT picture. For example, Moses delivering Israel from Egypt foreshadows Jesus delivering us from bondage to this world system. The serpent lifted up on a standard foreshadows Jesus being lifted up on the cross (Numbers 21:8 with John 3:14).

Two of the three primary Jewish feasts, Passover and Pentecost, function as Types and Shadows for the regeneration baptism and for the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Although they are both important, even a quick study of the OT shows that there

is more volume of scripture devoted to Passover than to Pentecost. Here is a brief breakdown of these feasts.

1. **Passover** is a feast held in remembrance of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt. The Passover lamb which was sacrificed at that time is a good example of a simple type and shadow. It represented (foreshadowed) the sacrifice of Christ. The lamb's blood applied to the door caused the angel of death to "pass over" that household. This foreshadowed the blood of Jesus which saves us from death.
2. **Pentecost** is the feast of the first fruits, also called the feast of weeks (Exodus 23:16). It is a feast associated with the wheat harvest.

Considering what these two feasts foreshadow in the NT — Passover, a symbolic acting out of Jesus' sacrificial death and purchase of our eternal salvation, and Pentecost, the representation of a season of Christian harvest and fruitfulness — it becomes clear that the Passover feast is the greater feast. Nevertheless, God ordained both of them, two distinctly different feasts that foreshadow two separate experiences: Jesus as Savior first, then, second, Jesus as Baptizer with the Holy Spirit.

So what does regeneration (salvation) include? At the very least our salvation experience includes the following:

1. Believing in my heart Jesus is risen and confessing with my mouth His Lordship (Romans 10:9-10).
2. Receiving the gift of eternal life (John 3:16, 5:24; Romans 6:23; I John 5:12).
3. Being born of the Spirit, also described as being born from above (Romans 8:9,11,16; John 1:12-13).

According to the scriptures, Jesus' disciples fulfilled all these requirements before the day of Pentecost. A curious note is that Jesus told His disciples as far back as Luke 10:20 that their names were written in heaven, so I do not believe that they were waiting for salvation on the day of Pentecost. As a matter of fact, fifty days before Pentecost they received the Holy Spirit when Jesus, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit," breathed on them

(John 20:22). It is pretty clear that He gave them the Holy Spirit on the night of His resurrection. At that same time, Jesus gave them the ministry of reconciliation (John 20:23 with II Corinthians 5:18-20).

Fifty days later (on the day of Pentecost), these same regenerated disciples were waiting, as instructed by the Lord Jesus, to receive the power they needed to minister reconciliation to the world.

*He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Luke 24:46 - 49*

*Gathering them together, He (Jesus) commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me." Acts 1:4*

*"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Acts 1:8*

These believers were waiting for the promise of the Father which would come upon them. Note that the word *promise* is in these verses and note the word *upon*. These are key words when studying this subject as is the word *gift*, which I will explain shortly. When Jesus gave His disciples the ministry of reconciliation He promised that His disciples would be witnesses, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins, but first they were to be clothed (equipped for the task) with power from on high. That power would be the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible records that the Holy Spirit did come upon God's people before Jesus came into the earth, even though they were not regenerated. Regeneration was not available before the death and resurrection of Christ. These pre-Christian believers

would be filled and prophesy or do other marvelous things. An example of this is found in Luke 1:41 and 67 when Elizabeth and Zachariah, the parents of John the Baptist prophesied under the power of the Holy Spirit. In the OT we have numerous examples of the Holy Spirit coming upon people for a limited time and for a particular purpose. Samson, Elijah and even King Saul experienced this manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence upon them. But the promise Jesus spoke of is different from what had been happening before. The promise of the Father would be a unique outpouring.

Jesus instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for an outpouring of power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). Remember that He had already given His disciples the Holy Spirit.

*And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:22*

So the promise of fulfillment spoken of in Acts 2:16 is not the same as what the disciples experienced with the Holy Spirit in John 20. The word "*filled*" found in Acts 2:4 may be translated from the Greek as equipped or supplied. The promise of the Father was fulfilled on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the believers for the purpose of supplying and equipping them with the necessary supernatural power to finish Christ's ministry.

Growing up I attended a non-evangelical liturgical church and was never exposed to the idea of experiencing God in a personal, supernatural way. It wasn't until I was a young man, after returning from serving in Vietnam, that I had my first encounter with the Holy Spirit. I had begun visiting Jesus People Church in Minneapolis. Everyone was experiencing supernatural Holy Spirit encounters. God was pouring His Holy Spirit out upon the hippies and drug addicts; the young people of that day were receiving salvation along with the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Miracles were normal. That was just how it was. So when I lifted my hands to receive Jesus I experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit. Shortly after that I asked Jesus to baptize me with the Holy Spirit. He did.

How did I know I received this baptism beyond the fact that it was an actual life-changing experience? Because I am a Bible-believing Christian, I feel it is important to examine how the believers in the book of Acts experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit. What did their experience look like? Then I will tell you more about mine.

First: They heard a mighty rushing wind. (Acts 2:2)

Second: Tongues of fire rested on them. (Acts 2:3)

Third: They spoke in languages they had never learned. (Acts 2:4)

John the Baptist said that the Lord Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16). Because tongues of fire rested on the believers, I believe this event in Acts 2:3 is the fulfillment of John the Baptist's words. This example along with those found in Acts 10:45-46 and Acts 19:6 are prototypes of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a gift to us from the Father. In Acts 2:38, Peter calls the baptism with the Holy Spirit the gift of the Holy Spirit. Verse 39 promises this gift to all future generations of Christians. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers is described again as a gift in Acts 10:45 and in Acts 11:17. Mark 16:17 and Luke 11:13 foretell the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38*

Back to my story. I was attending a church where the Holy Spirit was honored and was moving among the people in exciting ways. Because of my environment, I expected the supernatural. I received the baptism with the Holy Spirit in my bedroom and, I must report that tongues of fire did NOT rest upon me, but I did speak in tongues.

Please stay with me and read on. Perhaps you are feeling a bit anxious about what is coming next. You may have been taught that Jesus' followers were born again for the first time on the day of Pentecost. I hope you can see from my previous writing that they

were actually waiting that day to have a second experience that would give them power. Were you taught that tongues isn't for everyone or that it isn't your gift? Were you taught that tongues passed away with the apostles or that it comes from the devil? Has someone browbeat you about not speaking in tongues? If that's the case, I understand your hesitancy. But please read on.

On Pentecost when Jesus baptized his disciples with the Holy Spirit, (along with the 120 others who were there), the Spirit came upon them all and, as a result, they all spoke in tongues. Speaking in tongues is a supernatural gift. It is part of the Holy Spirit baptism gift package. I believe if you and I will accept tongues as part of the package, then we can know confidently that we have experienced a true baptism with the Holy Spirit because it lines up with what our brothers and sisters in the early church experienced.

### **What about tongues?**

Now let's look at tongues. According to Acts 2:4, all 120 believers, men and women, spoke in tongues. Again, when the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured upon the believers in Acts 10:44-46 and in Acts 19:6, the scriptures record that they all spoke in tongues. There is often a question about the believers in Samaria not speaking in tongues when they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-19). Please consider this: if Simon the sorcerer was so impressed by what happened as Peter and John prayed for people that he wished to buy this ability, what was he seeing? A man renowned for his magic must have seen something never seen before. Was it people speaking in tongues?

There is also a lot of confusion generated when you read about tongues in I Corinthians 14. I've been around tongues for years and it's taken me a long time to decipher everything Paul is trying to explain in this chapter. I'm still learning, but some things have become clear. I have concluded from my studies, and from my Christian experience, that there are private tongues and there are public tongues.

#### **1. Private Tongues**

When you and I get baptized with the Holy Spirit we automatically receive the ability to speak in private tongues. This ability is activated when the believer chooses to believe and speak. Some believers, me included, refer to these tongues or languages as our *prayer language*. I believe that this gift of tongues is given to the believer for one specific purpose - to talk to God. No matter where the believer is, alone or with others, when speaking in private tongues he or she is speaking to God. The believer *chooses* to speak in his prayer language. He can turn it on or off. With tongues he can edify (strengthen) his own personal spirit (I Corinthians 14:2, 4; Jude 20) or he can intercede for others (Ephesians 4:19-20).

## 2. Public Tongues

Public tongues is one of the nine supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit mentioned in I Corinthians 12:7-10. This is not a prayer language, although in some cases it could use the same sounds used when speaking in a private tongue. Notice that the tongues in verse 10 are labeled “various kinds” or “diverse tongues.” These tongues are spoken so other people can hear. This is not a believer talking to God in prayer but a form of prophecy delivered in tongues which deserves an interpretation. Some believers may actually have a ministry of public tongues with interpretation (I Corinthians 12:28-30). I have seen this firsthand. How to use public tongues correctly was the main focus of Paul’s writing in I Corinthians 14. Paul was correcting those who were disrupting meetings by using their personal prayer language in such a way that they were drawing attention to themselves. In this chapter, Paul states that he speaks in tongues much and encourages believers to speak in private and public tongues. He never forbids speaking in tongues. As a matter of fact, he forbids the forbidding of tongues. So public tongues is meant to deliver a message from God to people and requires an interpretation.

*“I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all ...” 1 Corinthians 14:18*

*“... do not forbid to speak in tongues.”* 1 Corinthians 14:34

Private tongues, which accompany the baptism with the Holy Spirit, is not found in the OT. It first appears in Acts. Public tongues and the other eight supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit listed in the I Corinthians 12:7-10 are all found in the OT. The handwriting on the wall, found in Daniel 5, is an example of tongues and interpretation. All of the manifestations, including various kinds of tongues, are given by the Holy Spirit's volition to a believer He chooses to use at the time.

So what's the difference? Private tongues is prayer, not prophecy. The believer makes the decision to speak to God using his prayer language. Public tongues is prophecy inspired by the Holy Spirit for the edification, exhortation and consolation of the believer, and requires interpretation by the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:3). The Holy Spirit chooses whom he will use to deliver the message. Any believer who is willing to cooperate with the Holy Spirit is eligible to be used in this way.

### **Is there any advantage to speaking in private tongues?**

I say there is great advantage because the purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is power: the power to be Christ's witness. When using the tongue given to me as a prayer language the Holy Spirit helps me get the power I need and keep that power. It also takes me beyond the limits of praying simply in English, my native language. I can pray in English and in tongues (I Corinthians 14:15).

#### **1. Creates a God Connection**

Accepting the supernatural syllables and words by faith and speaking them out puts me in direct contact with God (I Corinthians 14:2).

#### **2. Strengthens My Spirit**

Praying in the Spirit builds up my spirit. (I Corinthians 14:4b; Jude 20)

#### **3. Helps Me Pray Effectively for Others**

According to Romans 8:26-27, I need help with my praying. I can pray the will of God for myself and others when I pray using my private prayer

language. In I Corinthians 14:18, Paul informs us how much he values his private prayer language. In fact he encourages the Ephesians to pray at all times in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). Jude the apostle also spoke in tongues (v.20). So I believe this is what they meant when they wrote the phrase “*praying in the Spirit.*”

Praying in the Spirit has been a great blessing in my life. I never wish to minimize its importance to me. If anyone admires my walk with the Lord, I would have to say that much of my growth is because I pray regularly in the Spirit by using my prayer language. When I am afraid or unsure, the Holy Spirit will often comfort and counsel me as I pray in tongues.

*In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-28*

Romans 8:26-27 doesn't mention the use of tongues. But I think Paul, who did pray in tongues, knew that the Christian recipients of his letter did pray in tongues and would understand what he was writing about. The power of praying this way for yourself and others is enormous. I am a witness to this. Praying in the Spirit has enabled me to walk and live in the Spirit.

As a final word, I pray that you will not allow the evil one with his tricks and lies to rob you of the marvelous *gift* of the Holy Spirit. Please ask the Lord and be persistent as you seek His will in this matter (Luke 11:8-10). I pray that you will receive this experience and benefit from it by praying often in the Spirit.