

Is Baptism with the Holy Spirit a Second Blessing?

Acts 1:4-5

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Who has Christ given to the Church and to individual Christians that guarantees there is no trial, no tribulation, no affliction, no heartache, no enemy, or no sin so strong that you face in your life that the power of the resurrected Jesus Christ is not infinitely stronger yet? Who is the power of Jesus Christ that the glorified Jesus has sent in His place? That power of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus is the Almighty Holy Spirit (John 15:26). The Greek word translated “Comforter” literally means “one called alongside”, i.e. one called alongside to help, teach, comfort, strengthen, embolden, and encourage. In other words, whatever the risen and ascended Jesus might give to you (if He were bodily present) to meet your need to live a life of power and godliness to God’s glory, the Holy Spirit does so in Christ’s place.

Just as the apostles of Christ needed the power of the Holy Spirit working mightily in their lives to fulfill the great commission given to them by Christ to subdue the kingdoms of the world to the kingdom of Christ, so you likewise need the power of the Holy Spirit working mightily in your life to fulfill the commission given to you by Christ to subdue the kingdom of self to the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of your family to the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of the church to the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of your work place to the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdoms of this world to the kingdom of Christ. It is “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit saith the LORD of hosts (Zechariah 4:6). Whatever we need in order to live a life that brings God glory, dear ones, it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus will meet that need.

The main points from our text this Lord’s Day are the following: (1) The

Command of the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:4); (2) The Promise of the Father (Acts 1:4-5).

I. **The Command of the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:4).**

A. In the introductory sermon to this series on the Book of Acts, it was noted that Luke has written an inspired 2-volume history of what Jesus Christ **did** and **taught** (Acts 1:1)—the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Thus, not only is the Gospel of Luke a historical account of what Christ did and taught, but simply an account of what He “began” to do and teach. What Christ “began” to do and to teach in the Gospel of Luke, He continues to do and teach in the Book of Acts through the apostles and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

B. Before the Lord Jesus ascended bodily on high, He had a very specific command to give to His apostles: Wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father—the promise of the Father is the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4; Luke 24:49).

1. The apostles were not to begin their ministry concerning the resurrected and glorified Christ; they were not to go forth into all of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ until they had received the New Covenant blessing of the Holy Spirit.

2. Why were the disciples commanded to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father?

a. First, they were to wait in Jerusalem because there was an repeatable historical event that must first occur: the bodily ascension of Christ into heaven and His being exalted as King at the right hand of God in all of His glory (John 7:37-39; Acts 2:32-33). In other words, the waiting of the disciples in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit in His New Covenant relationship to believers was not a pattern that all Christians were to follow thereafter. This command of Christ to wait was

unique and extraordinary to the apostles of Christ alone; and only after Christ's exaltation would He give the royal gift of the Holy Spirit as a blessed evidence that He was reigning on high from His royal throne in heaven. Now there is no more command to wait, for Jesus is exalted, and the Holy Spirit is received in all of His New Covenant glory and power as Christ's Representative here on earth whenever a sinner dead in trespasses and sins like you or me is raised to new life (Acts 2:37-38,41).

b. But secondly, the apostles of Christ were commanded to wait in Jerusalem because the power of the resurrected and exalted Christ would be effectually applied by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

(1) The power of the Holy Spirit is not manifested in each Christian in exactly the same way. Sometimes it is manifested in miraculous ways—sometimes in sanctifying way—sometimes in preserving ways—sometimes manifested in times of great blessing and joy—sometimes manifested in times of great suffering and sorrow (2 Corinthians 6:4-10; Hebrews 11:32-38). The Apostle Paul said that the power of God was not manifested in his life only in the miraculous, but in his bodily weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

(2) The power of the Holy Spirit is needed in our lives to learn of the doctrine of Christ and to practice the doctrine of Christ—to put off error and sin, and to put on truth and righteousness. There is not a greater manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit than in the dead being raised to new life and being conformed to the image of Christ. Turning a hater of Christ into a lover of Christ—now that is the power of the Holy Spirit at work.

c. And thirdly, the apostles of Christ were commanded to wait in Jerusalem because there was a divine plan to bear witness of the crucified and resurrected Christ first to the Jews, then to the Samaritans, and then to the Gentiles (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). The divine pattern in the ministry of Christ and the apostles was to take the gospel to the Jew first, and when it was rejected by the Jews then to turn to the

Gentiles (John 1:12 “He came unto his own...”). God was honoring the Covenant of Grace He had made with Israel, but then grafting Gentiles into that same Covenant when the Jews would not believe in Christ (this is the meaning of the olive tree in Romans 11).

II. The Promise of the Father (Acts 1:4-5).

A. What is “the promise of the Father”? The promise is the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit is the One promised by the Father as the chief New Covenant blessing. This was the expectation of God’s blessing that would come in the last days when the Messiah would appear pouring forth His royal blessings as King upon His people. Let us be clear that the Holy Spirit was present in the Old Covenant and worked in the lives of God’s people in the Old Covenant. So the blessing of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant is not new in an absolute sense, but new in a specific sense (as we shall see in a moment). This is similar to the newness of the new commandment (John 13:34; Leviticus 19:18).

1. Note very briefly the work and presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Old Testament saints.

a. Abraham was justified by faith according to Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4 (which means that the Holy Spirit first regenerated Abraham and brought forth faith in Abraham).

b. Moreover, if the Holy Spirit regenerated and brought forth faith in Old Testament saints (like Abraham), He must have also indwelt believers as well for these are inward works of grace—**Joseph** (Genesis 41:38); **Joshua** (Numbers 27:18); **David** (Psalm 51:11).

c. The Holy Spirit also worked love within Old Testament saints for God’s Law and sanctified them (Psalm 119:97; Psalm 51:10).

d. The Holy Spirit likewise empowered believers in the Old Testament for service to God: **Gideon** (Judges 6:34); **Samson** (Judges

14:6); **David** (1 Samuel 16:13).

e. Thus, it is clear that the Holy Spirit was active and at work in and among God's people in the Old Testament. God's people in the Old Testament were familiar with who the Holy Spirit was and also how He worked in their lives.

2. And we find in the Old Testament prophecies that in the last days when Messiah will come to the earth, He will pour forth His Spirit upon **all flesh**, which was initiated in the ministry of Christ and the apostles: Isaiah 11:1 (the Spirit of the Lord would rest upon Christ, who would then pour it forth upon those who believe in Him); Joel 2:28 ("I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh"); Acts 2:17.

3. So if Old Covenant believers knew and experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, what was significant about the promise of the Holy Spirit and work of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant?

a. First, in the New Covenant the Holy Spirit is officially Christ's royal vicar (substitute and representative) since Christ's ascension (John 16:7). The pope is not the vicar of Christ—the Holy Spirit is (this lie and blasphemy continues today as he prepares to visit the United States this week). Since Christ is no longer bodily present, Jesus sent from the Father the Holy Spirit to work within and among us as He, Christ, would do if He were with us bodily. That is absolutely unique about the New Covenant blessing of the Holy Spirit.

b. Second, in the New Covenant the Holy Spirit that has been poured out upon believers is God's evidence to us of Christ's exaltation as Mediatorial King over the Church and over everything in the universe to the benefit of the Church (Acts 2:32-36). Thus, the various miraculous signs and wonders that were seen and heard were visible evidences that Christ was exalted to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. When King Jesus bestows gifts upon His Church at His exaltation, the best and greatest of all gifts is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

We not only belong to the Spirit of Christ, but the Spirit of Christ in some amazing way is a gift to us.

c. Third, in the New Covenant the Holy Spirit has a more familiar relationship with believers than in the Old Covenant due to the finished work of Christ (John 14:16-17—the pronouns in the plural likely point to the relationship of the Holy Spirit to believers collectively). This is simply an expression of contrast demonstrating the degree of closeness that the Holy Spirit will bear to New Covenant believers collectively (and individually as well). Because Christ has died, has been raised from the dead, and has ascended to intercede for us, the Holy Spirit grants us an even greater degree of assurance of our justification, adoption, union, and communion with Christ. The fellowship we now enjoy with Christ through the Holy Spirit is also greater by degree because of Christ’s work.

d. Fourth, in the New Covenant the Holy Spirit is poured out upon “all flesh”, and not merely upon Jews. The Spirit’s work and power works mightily and powerfully to a greater degree in the lives of both genders (male and female), in all social classes, and nationalities than in the Old Covenant (Acts 2:17).

e. Fifth, in the New Covenant the Holy Spirit works in a more powerful way in transforming and empowering the hearts and lives of God’s people than He did in the Old Covenant—granting a greater degree of boldness in witness and testimony for all believers because Christ has been raised from the dead and has ascended into heaven and we are powerfully united to Him. These are not differences in kind (or nature), but differences in degree due to the finished work of Jesus. Just as the new commandment is new because of the coming of Christ, so likewise is the work of the Holy Spirit.

B. How did the apostles and the early Christians (and how do we) receive the Holy Spirit (“the promise of the Father”)? Is this “promise of the Father” i.e. the Holy Spirit received by all Christians through faith

alone at conversion, or is this blessing of the Holy Spirit received by some Christians who seek it as a subsequent, distinct experience (as a second blessing)?

1. Dear ones, this is a **doctrinal question** that separates professing Christians and professing Christian Churches one from another. But, dear ones, this is also a very **practical question** as well that affects every Christian who trusts alone in Christ alone for his/her eternal salvation.

a. For if the promise of the Father (or the baptism with the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:5) is given to all Christians at conversion, then all Christians already have the same powerful Spirit to work mightily in their lives, families, churches, and nations. It then is not a question of obtaining something you as a Christian do not have, but rather of growing in something you already have and of exercising the power of the Holy Spirit which is already yours in Christ Jesus and was bestowed upon you at conversion.

b. But if the promise of the Father (or the baptism with the Holy Spirit) is given only to Christians who specifically seek it from the Lord, who wait upon the Lord in prayer, who call upon the Lord to give them this additional and subsequent blessing of the Holy Spirit, then it is something that some Christians may indeed lack and must seek, pray for, and call upon the Lord to give it to them.

2. Thus, we see once again how important doctrine is to our practice. What we believe about how we receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit is going to practically determine how we live the Christian life and how we teach others to live the Christian life. Is it a matter of obtaining what you do not have or is it a matter of applying what is already yours in Christ?

C. There are a number of churches that teach a second, distinct blessing of the Spirit that is alleged to follow conversion and the

forgiveness of sins.

1. Pentecostal Churches and some Charismatic Churches (not all) call this second work of grace and power the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

2. Wesleyan and Methodist Churches call this second work of grace entire sanctification (in some of these churches this experience likewise leads to a view of perfectionism in this life).

3. Even in the Roman Catholic Church there is a second, distinct blessing of the Spirit called Confirmation (the first blessing being the forgiveness of all sin, original and actual, in Baptism). What is the sacrament of Confirmation according to the Church of Rome?

By the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a **special strength of the Holy Spirit** (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1285). It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is **the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost** (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1302).

What is Confirmation?

Confirmation is the sacrament **through which the Holy Ghost comes to us in a special way** and enables us to profess our faith as strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ (*Baltimore Catechism*, #151).

D. On the other hand, there are also a number of churches that teach Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit once and for all at conversion (and not as a second, distinct work of grace after conversion).

1. Reformed and Presbyterian Churches (along with various Evangelical Churches) profess that the Bible teaches there is one monumental work of Spirit baptism which belongs to every single believer and which Christ pours forth at our conversion to Christ and faith in Christ (notice the relationship of conversion to the gift of the Spirit—John 7:37-39; Acts 2:38).

a. The word “baptize” is used with regard to water baptism and Spirit baptism. Just as John the Baptist baptized with water, so Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke

3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

(1) The word “baptize” is language of initiation into the promised blessings of the New Covenant—it is not the language of subsequent Christian experience or second blessings. Water baptism represents especially the promise of cleansing from sin by the Holy Spirit, which is that initial blessing received at conversion. Spirit baptism is the reality to which water baptism points (just outward circumcision pointed to the need for inward circumcision).

(2) Thus, just as water baptism is the sign of initiation into the Visible Church (of those who profess the true religion and their children), so Spirit baptism is the reality of initiation into the Invisible Church (of those who are truly regenerate and united to Christ by faith).

b. Each of the first 6 times that Spirit baptism occurs, it parallels the sign of water baptism with John as the baptizer to the reality of Spirit baptism with Jesus as the baptizer. The last time Spirit baptism is mentioned is in 1 Corinthians 12:13 where it is clear that Spirit baptism is not limited to some Christians or even to many Christians, or to those who wait and pray, or to those who receive it sometime after conversion. Spirit baptism is that which incorporates every regenerate child of God into the Invisible Church of all God’s elect and redeemed—notice the use of “all” not some (aorist). That is what baptism with the Holy Spirit is.

c. From that gracious bestowal of the Holy Spirit, once and for all given, flows the daily exercise and application of grace and power to be filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit in growing the fruit of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18—present tense; Galatians 5:22-23).

2. Thus, there is no waiting for a second, distinct work of the Holy Spirit after conversion, no earnestly seeking, weeping, or praying in order to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Jesus from the right of God the Father graciously and freely baptizes those with the Holy Spirit who merely come in faith to Christ (Galatians 3:2,13-14). Dear ones, baptism

with the Holy Spirit is the chief among many blessings that the Lord Jesus bestows upon all believers at the time that they believe, repent, and are pardoned for all their sins.

Jesus Christ is your heavenly intercessor, but the Holy Spirit graciously given to you is your inward intercessor (Romans 8:26). Not only does hope of the resurrection comfort your hearts in the midst of the suffering in this life as Paul states in Romans 8, but the Holy Spirit is a comfort to you, for when you struggle in your weakness to even know what to express in your prayers to the Lord, He comes unto you to help you bear that huge burden and intercedes in your heart to teach you to desire and pray according to the will of God. Far too little attention has been given to this inward Intercessor, but He is likewise a sympathetic Intercessor like Jesus Himself. This is the nearness and closeness and familiarity and communion of the Holy Spirit that we enjoy in the New Covenant. From where does the courage to stand for Christ and His truth come? From where do the affections and desires to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Christ come? From where does the perseverance to endure hardships come? From where does the sympathy for others come? It is the promise of the Father that was poured out upon you when you were baptized with the Holy Spirit as the supreme gift in the package of your salvation in Christ. The Holy Spirit is not parceled out to believers in installments, but is entirely yours as the inheritance purchased for you by Christ and sent to you from Christ when you trust alone in Christ alone for your eternal salvation. Now we seek not more of the Spirit, but to give up ourselves more to the Spirit's control in our lives—that is to be continually filled with the Spirit.

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