

Session 8: The Spirit's Baptism

Series: *Is It So? Reconsidering the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*

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Introduction

- The concept of baptism by the Holy Spirit as a point of tension among believers.
- Key theological questions:
 - Is Spirit baptism tied to salvation or a subsequent experience?
 - Is it universal or selective?
 - Is it tied to external signs or an internal reality?
- Overview of the four main perspectives:
 - Pentecostal/Charismatic View
 - Evangelical View
 - Dispensational View
 - Reformed View
- Approach: A literal interpretation to clarify distinctions between water baptism, Spirit baptism, and their roles.

Baptized By The Spirit

1. **Prophetic Foretelling of Spirit Baptism**
 - **Matthew 3:11:** John the Baptist's prophecy of Spirit baptism by the Messiah.
 - **Acts 1:5:** Jesus' reiteration of Spirit baptism as an imminent event.
 - **Acts 2:4:** Fulfillment at Pentecost through dramatic manifestations (tongues, fire).
2. **Is This the Same as That Prophesied in the Old Testament?**
 - Evidence for fulfillment:
 - Alignment with Jewish expectations (*Matthew 3:11*).
 - Peter's declaration (*Acts 2:16*).
 - Manifestations matching Joel 2 and Ezekiel 36 imagery.
 - Limitations of fulfillment:
 - Partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (e.g., not all flesh, no apocalyptic signs).
 - Ezekiel's promise of national restoration remains unfulfilled.
 - Distinction: Spirit baptism at Pentecost tied to Israel's prophetic program, separate from the Church's mystery program.
3. **Can This Prophetic Baptism Be Transferred to the Church?**
 - Challenges of transfer:
 - Risks conflating Israel's prophetic program with the Church's mystery program.
 - Conditions of Spirit baptism at Pentecost (e.g., signs, covenants) not present in the Church Age.
 - Conclusion: Spirit baptism in Acts 2 is unique to Israel and not applicable to the Church.
4. **This is Theirs, Not Ours**
 - Summary: Spirit baptism as described in *Matthew 3:11*, *Acts 1:5*, and *Acts 2:4* is distinct from Paul's teachings on the Church's baptism into the body of Christ.

Baptism into the Body of Christ

1. **1 Corinthians 12:13**
 - Key insights: Unity in the body of Christ transcends ethnic and social boundaries.
 - Description of baptism into the body as a spiritual act of unification with Christ and fellow believers.
2. **Metaphorical Language**
 - Paul's use of metaphors (e.g., "baptized into one body," "drink into one Spirit").
 - Emphasis on relational and communal aspects of the Church.
3. **Baptism into the Body as a Work of the Spirit**
 - Baptism into the body as a metaphor for becoming members of the body by "one Spirit."
4. **Distinction from the Baptism of the Spirit**
 - Baptism into the body (*1 Corinthians 12:13*) differs from Spirit baptism at Pentecost.
 - Separate roles in God's dispensational plan:
 - Spirit baptism in Acts pertains to Israel.
 - Baptism into the body pertains to the Church.

An Alternative Interpretation: Is "One Spirit" the Holy Ghost?

1. **The Role of Metaphor in Paul's Writing**
 - Exploration of "one Spirit" as a collective ethos (e.g., fellowship, shared purpose) rather than the Holy Spirit.
2. **Implications of This View**
 - Focus on unity over agency.
 - Avoiding theological overlap with Israel's Spirit baptism.
 - Consistency with Paul's metaphorical language.
3. **Evaluating the Evidence**
 - Alternative view as a plausible but minority interpretation.

Which Baptism Passages Are Spiritual?

1. **Default Meaning of Baptism**
 - Principle: Baptism implies water unless specified otherwise.
 - Concerns about reinterpreting "baptism" as purely spiritual.
2. **Key Passages**
 - **Mark 16:16:** Water baptism as the default understanding.
 - **Romans 6:3-4:** Water baptism as literal and symbolic of death and resurrection.
 - **Galatians 3:27:** Metaphorical baptism equated with "putting on Christ."
 - **Colossians 2:12:** Parallels *Romans 6:3-4*; water baptism remains the default unless otherwise indicated.
 - **Ephesians 4:4-5:** The "one baptism" as spiritual, emphasizing unity over exclusivity

Conclusion

1. Summary of Spirit baptism's meanings and applications.
2. Distinction between Israel's prophetic baptism and the Church's mystery baptism.
3. Importance of maintaining hermeneutical consistency and respecting dispensational frameworks.