

XXII. The Holy Spirit in Biblical Perspective
Led by the Spirit
“Baptism with the Holy Spirit and Its Blessings”
Matthew 3:7–12

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This is God’s Word. It’s the truth. This is speaking of the ministry of baptism. Matthew 3:7–12 says [7] *But when he (John the Baptist) saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? [8] Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. [9] And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. [10] Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

[11] *“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. [12] His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

In the last study we looked at the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit which was very sobering but in this study we will look at the baptism *with* the Holy Spirit. Normally I like to preach through passages of Scripture known as expository preaching and we have done that in our series ‘Led by the Spirit’ looking at wonderful, glorious, majestic text of Romans 8 covering the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Then we looked at John 13 through 16 where Jesus is giving His closing sermon on the ministry of the Holy Spirit through His Upper Room Discourse, before He went to the cross.

To finish out this theme of being ‘Led by the Spirit’ I want to tackle these subjects that I tend to get many questions about – gifts of the Spirit, fruit of the Spirit, how to walk in the Spirit, what it means to be filled in the Spirit, etc. In the last study we looked at the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and we learned that this is a sin that is unpardonable because it is a rejection and declaration of evil, the ministry of the only One who can bring you to the One whereby you are forgiven on your sins. You may be forgiven of any and all sins in Christ but the one sin that is unpardonable is when you assign evil to the ministry of the Holy Spirit instead of surrendering to that ministry which would bring you to Christ. If you don’t surrender to that ministry and come to Christ then that becomes unpardonable because you haven’t come to the only One who can forgive you of your sins.

It is more than that in that it is an unpardonable sin that can be and sometimes is afflicted upon men and women in this age, not in only the age to come. Normally it is death that closes the door of grace. [27] *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment* (Hebrews 9:27). Before death, today is the day of salvation. Yet there are some that we will not know until we get to eternity but the Bible has revealed some to us. The Bible warns us that there are some that God closes the day of grace prior to the door of death. To name a few from the Bible there was Esau and Pharaoh. During the plagues that came upon Egypt Pharaoh kept hardening his heart and then all of a sudden it says that God hardened his heart. In other words, God sovereignly shut the door of grace.

This is a sin that only those exposed to grace continually can commit. Hebrews 6 talks about those who have been enlightened, tasted and seen but yet declare unholy and profane, then there remains no sacrifice for them. Peter even says that their last state is worse than their first. What can be worse than our first state? Our first state is that we are dead in our sins. So what is worse than that is being dead in sins with no hope of grace in this life. It's not our call to make the statement of who these people are but it is God's warning that those who insist with patterned declarations that to demean and profane the work of the Holy Spirit, assigning it to evil and the kingdom of darkness then there remains no sacrifice for them, not only in the age to come but in this present age. We took time to look through that and it's a sober text.

I concluded that study on the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit for those who hadn't yet come to Christ to come to Christ. Do not continue to profane and reject the One who is calling you to the Savior. The door of grace is shut at death but it can be shut before death even as the Scriptures tell us and warn us. So the next topic I want to cover in this study is baptism with the Spirit and we're still doing expository on these topics because we're still going to the key texts that deal with them to help us better understand them.

Most of you are exposed to media and technology that are all telling you that baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second blessing that comes to people who have come to Christ when you seek it and the evidence is speaking in a tongue that is incoherent but that only the Holy Spirit can interpret. This is wrong. First of all there is nothing in the Bible that talks of baptism *of* the Holy Spirit. It is baptism *with* the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't baptize anybody. There are six evidences of it that I will give you toward the conclusion of this study. I want to try and disabuse us of this notion of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and then cause us to rejoice and embrace on exactly what the Bible is teaching in this regard of baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Before I get to this topic I want to remind you of Ezekiel 36, Jeremiah 31, Joel 2 and Isaiah which all tell us that the Lord is going to do a new work, a New Covenant. The Old Covenant is anticipating it and the New Covenant will accomplish what was promised to Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. God says He is going to bring a new Israel from all the nations and bring them into the Kingdom of God. He will give them a new heart, a new record, a new life, a new sign and their sins He will remember no more. They will be forgiven and will be clothed with His righteousness. Circumcision will be fulfilled and the new sign will be that of baptism where He will sprinkle clean water upon them. He will also put His Spirit within them and cause them to walk in His statutes. That is the prophetic promises of the Father. Now we come to what the Bible teaches about it. We do this in the ministry and message of John the Baptist.

Let's look at the text for this study. Matthew 3:7–10 says [7] *But when he (John the Baptist) saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? [8] Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. [9] And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. [10] Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

John the Baptist is out at a place called Bethany by the Jordan and there he is doing his ministry. What is the ministry of John the Baptist? Here are five things about the ministry of John the Baptist. One, is John the Baptist is the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He is the one coming to make ready the ministry of the Mediator of the New Covenant, the One who is calling Israel to repentance to receive this Messiah who is coming through the nation of Israel. That is why John

the Baptist will say ‘the One coming after me.’ John is not the Messiah, Prophet, Priest or King but he is the one sent from God in order to make ready the way of the Lord.

Two, is that John the Baptist fulfills the prophecy in the Old Testament that Elijah would precede the coming of the Messiah. How do I know that? It is because Jesus said it when He was asked about Elijah, He said it was fulfilled in John the Baptist (Matthew 11:13–14, Luke 1:17) and that he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. John the Baptist is given the assignment to preach and prepare to call Israel to repentance.

Three, John the Baptist is the last prophet of the Old Testament and the first herald of the New Testament. Do you see how he is doing the work of the prophets here in this text? He is bringing a lawsuit against Israel. God has done this and you have done this, repent of your sins that you might be ready to receive God’s grace when He sends His Messiah to this nation. He is bringing a law case against Israel as a prophet and he is the first herald of the Gospel. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The fourth aspect of John the Baptist’s ministry is he is making use of baptism as the ritual sign of repentance or of cleansing and that is why he is calling them to baptism. The baptism is the outward sign declaring their desire to be cleansed. The pouring of the water and the sprinkling clean is an appropriate sign that he now uses calling people to ‘his baptism.’ So he is calling Israel to repentance and to receive the coming Messiah.

Five, he is making use and highlighting baptism as the ritual act declaring the work of cleansing grace in the life of those who respond. So those are the aspects of John the Baptist’s ministry. So what is his message of repentance?

John is out there preaching, people are coming, repenting and being baptized and so Jerusalem sends down the Pharisees and Sadducees to check this new rock star preacher out. They see all these people being baptized and think so why don’t we get baptized. It’s obvious John the Baptist hadn’t been to the school of seeker sensitive ministry. Look at what he says to them.

Matthew 3:7–8 says [7] *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? [8] Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”* This is carefully chosen language here. He is basically telling these teachers and leaders that their teaching and leading is spiritual poison. You have come for the symbol but not for repentance. The reason you haven’t come from repentance is what you are doing in your teaching and leading. The fruit reveals the root. The fruit that is bad will not only show an evil root but it shows a tree that will be cut down and thrown into the fire speaking of hell. They have come for the symbol because the crowd is here but I’m telling you that you must come in repentance. If you don’t then you continue to spread poison with your teaching and your leadership. That is what he is saying to them.

When he brings up the baptism of fire it has to do with the One that is coming after him. His message and the use of this water baptism as a statement of consecration and cleansing is to prepare the way for Him. Let me tell you about Him. In Matthew 3:11 John says [11] *“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. (This is John’s way of saying Jesus is coming in the flesh where you not only take your sandals off but I’m not even worthy to carry His.) He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”* This is a promise.

In other words, this Messiah is a baptizer and He has two baptisms. He baptizes with the Holy Spirit and He baptizes with fire. So this is who is coming. The Holy Spirit baptism is unto salvation and there is the baptism of fire that is unto condemnation. A lady came to me one

time and my 'old man' crept up in me at this time. After the service she graciously came up to me thanking me for my sermon and then said "I know you've been baptized with the Spirit and with fire." I said "I'd like one out of the two of those." She said "What do you mean?" I said "I'm not interested in the baptism with fire." "Don't you want it?" "No ma'am, but I'd like to be on fire for Jesus but I'd don't want His baptism with fire. One of the reasons I love Jesus is that I don't get the baptism with fire because He took it for me." She said 'the Bible says He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.' "I agree with you but who will He baptize with the Holy Spirit – those who will be saved and those who are baptized with fire are those whom He judges."

All of us reading this will be baptized by Jesus, either with the Holy Spirit and salvation or with fire and condemnation and judgment. Why would I say that? Let's look further in the text. When He comes again this is what He will do. Matthew 3:12 says [12] *His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire* (that's hell). The saved are those He gathers into the barn, His wheat, but the second death which is a forever death apart from the presence of God and the isolation of utter darkness and torment are for the chaff, the unsaved.

There are three times fire is used in the text. Two of the times when fire is used it refers to judgment. He will cut the tree down to cast it into fire, hell. He will gather the chaff and throw it into the unquenchable fire, hell. So it stands to Biblical reason in the text that His baptism with fire is His pouring forth of judgment at His second coming upon those who have not been baptized with the Spirit, those who are chaff instead of wheat. Those are His two baptisms.

It is interesting to note is the use of the word baptism. Most of think of baptism as this New Testament thing where one gets baptized with water and baptism is actually not a New Testament phenomenon. Baptisms are all over the place in the Old Testament. There were three types of baptisms in the Old Testament mentioned in Hebrews 9 but we're supposed to move on from them because they pointed to Christ. The three types of baptisms were with water, oil and blood. They would dip the hyssop and sprinkle the blood. They would dip the hand and pour the oil and they would dip the hand and pour the water to sprinkle clean. Baptism with water, for instance in Numbers 8, when the priests were being baptized at age 30 to there would be the sprinkling of clean water on them. The baptism with oil was done with the High Priest where they would sprinkle oil on his head and it would sprinkle down to the hem of his garment and to the tassels of his robe. Then there is the baptism with blood where the items are cleansed, set aside and consecrated by the instrument being dipped and then the object is sprinkled clean by those three acts of baptism in the Old Testament.

Baptism means anointing of God's presence, blessing, cleansing by God's grace and consecration. That is when baptism is used so John the Baptist is using as he is calling people to cleansing and repentance. Now he says Jesus is a baptizer. He will anoint for He will anoint the Spirit for salvation and He will anoint the wrath of God in fire, in judgment for all eternity but the Jesus that will do that will also highlight this notion of baptism. Whenever you use the word baptism in Jesus, He is connected to baptism in four ways in the Bible.

Number one is Jesus is connected to baptism because that is how He begins His ministry as Messiah – Prophet, Priest and King. Jesus comes to John the Baptist to get baptized in Matthew 3:13–17 which says [13] *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. [14] John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" [15] But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us*

to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. [16] And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Here John the Baptist knows exactly what Jesus is talking about when he consents to baptize Him. Jesus is the Prophet, Priest and King. A prophet and king could begin their ministry at any time but a priest could only begin his ministry at age 30 and that’s why Jesus waited until then to begin to His ministry. I think He could have pulled it off at 12 years of age but He had to be obedient to the law. The Levites would enter into the Tent of Ministry at age 30, having been baptized by another priest, Numbers 8. John the Baptist is the same age as Jesus except six months older and he also is a priest. John’s father was priest as well. That is why he quits arguing with Jesus and baptizes Him. So baptism is an inauguration, initiating His ministry of Prophet, Priest and King – His public ministry for us. Jesus would have knelt in the River Jordan and clean water would have been poured over Him, sprinkling down upon Him. The Spirit was poured out upon Him like a dove and His Father declares that this isn’t just any Mediator but ‘this is My Son in whom I am well pleased!’

Secondly, Jesus is connected to baptism by what He declares in Luke 12, which is that He has a baptism to undergo and that He is distressed until it is accomplished. He was speaking of the cross where the baptism of fire due to His people He would take on their behalf. He would be baptized with the judgment of God and fire at the cross. He would cry out ‘My God, My God why has Thou forsaken Me?!’ That distress would be so great that He would sweat blood with His capillaries bursting before He would go there.

The third connection Jesus has with baptism is that He will implement baptism as the sign of the New Covenant in obedience to Ezekiel 36 where it says ‘you will sprinkle clean water upon them.’ Then what does He do? He then says [18] *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:18–20). There is no longer circumcision because baptism replaces it, just as the Lord’s Supper will replace the Passover.

His fourth connection with baptism is that Jesus will baptize His people, having purchased the promise of the Father. Let’s look at Acts 2. Jesus is engaged in His ministry, has ascended to heaven victoriously, has poured forth His Spirit among His people and as He baptizes His people with the Spirit of God here is what Peter says. Acts 2:32–33 says [32] *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. [33] Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.* In other words, Jesus is the Baptizer of the Holy Spirit that He pours out upon His people. The Holy Spirit isn’t baptizing but Jesus is baptizing His people with the Holy Spirit.

So here is the takeaway on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the multi-faceted blessing promised by God the Father and purchased by God the Son for every Christian. Every one of you who know Jesus don’t have to hope for the second blessing of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. You know Jesus because you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. He is the blessing to bring you to Christ and there are blessings that He brings with it. What are the evidences of having been baptized with the Holy Spirit? There are six of them.

Blessing number one is that when He baptizes you with the Holy Spirit you now have power. Acts 1:4–8 says [4] *And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise (the Holy Spirit) of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; [5] for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

[6] *So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” [7] He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. [8] 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.”*

How do you know people who have been baptized with the Holy Spirit? They have the power so that sin’s curse has been eradicated and they are set free from death unto life. They are set free from the chains of sin to come to Christ and they have been set free from the dominion of sin. The power of God is within them. The Holy Spirit has empowered them.

Blessing number two is that the Holy Spirit has focused them. If you are reading this today apart from Christ I don’t know where your focus is. I know you have one. It could be technology, consumer things, football, vacations, houses, the latest gadget on the market, etc. and these things never satisfy so you’ll keep needing another focus. When God, by His grace, saves you and pours His Spirit upon you, you not only have power to leave the tomb of death, kill sin and pursue Christ the rest of your life, but you can now bear witness of Christ to the world. Here is how you know if people are Spirit-filled – they have the power to love Jesus and they have the focus to love Jesus in Word and deed. You can tell a Spirit-filled Christian and church because they are always making much about Jesus. That is what pleases the Holy Spirit for He did not come to call attention to Himself or His gifts but He came that we would make much of Jesus with power.

The third blessing is that the Spirit brings security, the security of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Let’s look at Ephesians 1:3–14 and this is a doxology that begs to be put to music. In the original language this is one sentence, being 228 words but it has great order. It blesses God the Father in verses 3 to 6 and ends with this statement; to the praise of His glorious grace. Then it praises God the Son beginning in verse 7 to 12 and ends up with ‘to the praise of His glorious grace.’ Then it praises God the Spirit in Ephesians 1:13–14 which says [13] *In him (Christ) you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

This is like when you want to buy a house and the seller says ‘Ok where’s your down payment, your earnest payment?’ Jesus says ‘I’ve saved you. I have forgiven your sins. I am preparing a place for you and My earnest payment is the Holy Spirit who will bring you to Me in salvation and to Me for all eternity.’ He is the Down Payment for you are guaranteed and sealed by the promised presence of the Holy Spirit from Christ.

The fourth blessing is that He is “Other” Helper and Teacher. Jesus will give us through the Holy Spirit teachers in the church but He is right within you as the Teacher as well. The Holy Spirit is doing His work to teach you the glorious truth of God’s Word.

The fifth blessing is that He brings unity with diversity. Ephesians 4:1–7 says [1] *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is*

one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. [7] But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

When Jesus has saved you then you are distinct. There is diversity in the body of Christ. Every church, if it is doing its work, ought to be reflecting the makeup of its parish to some degree. When I pastored a church in Miami, Florida we had a multi-racial and multi-cultural overwhelmingly different church. We lived on a street that had someone from St. Lucia, St. Vincent's, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica and I thought 'we don't live in the US but we live in the West Indies.' Praise God it was showing up in our church. We who are a people have become the people of God. Our unity is not interchangeability. Our unity is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and one Spirit who is at work in each one of us with power to bring each one back to focus on Jesus in the body of Christ, maintaining the unity of the Spirit.

The sixth blessing is His personal presence. I love it when Jesus says in the Bible 'I will be with you.' But Jesus is in heaven so He says 'I am with you because I am sending to you the Holy Spirit who is known to you from now on as the Spirit of Christ because the same Holy Spirit who was with Me from the womb of Mary to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and out of the tomb back into glory, in My Name I have poured out to you, who will be with you from your new birth all the way to your new home. I am with you.' His personal presence at all times is with me. Matthew 1:21 says [21] *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* Matthew 1:23 says [23] *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).*

Then Christ goes to glory and says [19] *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, **I am with you always**, to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:19–20). He has been poured out in you through the presence of the Holy Spirit and He has sealed you.

We are not looking for an ecstatic experience. I have just given you the evidence of the Spirit of God within us, for we live with power, focus on the preeminence of Christ and we're secure, sealed by the Spirit. We have the Helper, the Teacher, and unity out of diversity for we have the very presence of God that has brought us from death unto life and will bring us to glory so that we have a forever life, with a forever family of God, in the forever new heavens and new earth. That is the presence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit who has come upon us. Those are the evidences of the promise of the Father, secured and purchased by the Son and poured out upon and in us. I will put My Spirit within you and will cause you to walk in His statutes.

I like the television show Blue Bloods and wrote two letters to the producers for two episodes I didn't like but it reminds me of a program I used to watch growing up called Tightrope and Tightrope reminded me of another program which was Dragnet. I love detective stories and they solve the problems. I love it when the detectives get together and say 'was it an inside job or an outside job.'

Hopefully today you have understood something. If you know Jesus then you have been saved by grace and it was both an outside job and an inside job. On the outside Jesus went to the cross and the baptism of fire that you should have received, He received for you and it was accomplished. You are forgiven. You are clothed in His righteousness. Then He did an inside job where He poured His Spirit within you and set you free to come to and follow Him, sealed by

Him. And He is with you until you are brought to be with the glorified Christ in a new heavens and a new earth for His down payment has been made by the Spirit of God.

I would be terribly unfaithful if I didn't say to all who are reading this that if you are reading this and you haven't come to Christ and that glorious baptism with His Spirit has not fallen upon you, then there is a baptism awaiting you. That is the baptism with fire of judgment. I plead with you to come to Christ, the One who went to the cross to take that baptism for you that you could have the Spirit of the Living God with you, and you will be with Him for all eternity. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart in these precious moments. O beautiful Savior, Lord of creation, Lover of our souls, thank You for the outside job at the cross. Thank You for the inside job of Your Spirit so that we would come to the One that loves us and has loosed us from our sins. Father if there is anyone reading this that has not yet come to that Christ, Spirit of the Living God I pray that You would now fall upon them and bring them from death unto life and they would flee the wrath to come, to come to the One who took the wrath for them. Father, for those who know You, may they walk in the triumph of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit who has sealed them, who brings us together to serve Him, and who brings all of us to love the preeminence, the prominence and the proclamation of Jesus for I pray this in His Name, Amen.

Power Point

The Ministry of John the Baptist
The Message of John the Baptist

Life Takeaway

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the multi-faceted blessing promised by God the Father and purchased by God the Son for every Christian.

Blessings

1. Power
2. Focus
3. Security
4. The "Other" Helper and Teacher
5. Unity with Diversity
6. Personal Presence