

WHAT IS 'SPIRIT-BAPTISM'? -- Rev. Prof. Dr. F.N. Lee

Spirit-baptism is the engrafting by God the Holy Ghost, in association with water-baptism, into the New Testament Visible Church at her birth on Pentecost Sunday. It still recurs thereafter, in association with water baptism, whenever new Members are thereby engrafted into that Church Visible. Symbolically, it signifies and seals the regeneration of God's elect. See *Westminster Confession of Faith* 25:2b & 28:1b and *Westminster Larger Catechism* 62w, 161s, 162a, 165l, & 167pqy.

In Old Testament times, no Spirit-endued or Spirit-imbued person was thereby "baptized in the Spirit." All Old Testament predictions of Spirit-outpouring, were fulfilled only at Christ's own baptism -- as consummated on Pentecost Sunday.

So too were all the water-baptisms administered by John the Baptist. He constantly preached to his Hebrew converts that Jesus, unto Whom he was baptizing, would Himself soon come -- and baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire! Lk. 3:16 cf. Acts 1:5 & 2:1f.

There were only three or four Post-Pentecost "out-tricklings" of the Spirit. Acts 8:12-18; 8:37?; 10:44f cf. 11:15f; & 19:1-6. These were all only in respect of gathering the 'first-fruits' of Non-Hebrew Christians -- and ingrafting them into the new Church Visible alias Christ's storehouse for His wheat. Mt. 3:11f & Lk. 3:16f.

Soon after Acts 19:1-6, came Acts 19:9f. That was the final separation of the Spirit-completed Christ-professing Church from the Spirit-depleted Christ-denying Synagogue. Thenceforth, all Spirit-baptisms were at water-baptism -- when new members were and are ingrafted into the Visible Church. Rom. 4:11,25; 6:3-5; I Cor. 1:2,14f; 3:6; 4:1; 6:11; 7:14; 10:2; 12:13; 15:29; 16:15; II Cor. 1:21f; Eph. 1:13f; 4:5,30; 5:26,32; 6:1-4; I Pet. 1:2; 3:18f; Rev. 7:4; 22:2. Details of much of the above now follow.



1. There are many Old Testament examples of "Spirit-fallings" during those ancient days. Num. 11:25-26; 27:18; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6,19; I Sam. 10:10; 11:6; 10:10; 19:9,20,24; Ezek. 2:2; 3:12,14,24; 8:3; 11:1,24; etc. Such, however, are never called Spirit-baptisms! Indeed, the baptism of the Spirit at His future outpouring, is seen by the Old Testament as a single event -- to occur at the incarnation of the Messiah and the sending forth of His Spirit. Ps. 72:6f; Prov. 1:23; Isa. 32:15f; 44:3f; Ezk. 36:25f; 39:7,29; Hos. 6:1-3; Joel 2:16,23,28f.

2. The water-baptisms of John the Baptist were always administered only: a) after professed repentance from sin and toward God-the-Father; b) together with the Word-proclamation of the need immediately to trust in the coming Messianic God-the-Son; and c) accompanied by the promise of His baptismal outpouring on Pentecost Sunday of God-the-Spirit. Mt. 3:1,11f; Mk. 1:4-8; Lk. 3:3-17; Jh. 1:15-34; 3:23-36. See too: Jh. 7:37-39; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4-5f,22f; 2:1-4; 10:37,44,47; 11:15-17; 13:23-25f; 15:8f.

3. Christ's own water-baptism was simultaneously a Spirit-baptism. Thereby His own human body was set apart as a temple of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, after His ascension and from Pentecost Sunday onward, the Visible Church would be His mystical body here on earth. Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-12; Lk.

3:21-22; Acts 2:1-4,33-39,42-47; I Cor. 6:15-20; 12:13,27.

4. In Acts 2:1-4, all previously water-baptized people, being Hebrews, now received the completion of their water-baptism -- in their Spirit-baptism into Christ' s new earthly body (the Visible Church). As His wheat, they were then gathered into Christ' s new storehouse. Gathered together were not only the twelve apostles who miraculously spoke forth the Gospel in foreign languages. Acts 1:2,8,11,26 & 2:1-4,7,14. Also there were the rest of the disciples, who did not then so speak. Acts 1:14-15 cf. Lk. 3:10-16. As Prof. Dr. F.F. Bruce declares in his *Commentary* on Acts 2:4, "the Spirit-baptism took place once for all, so far as the believing community was concerned."

5. Immediately after that birthday of the Church Visible, Peter urged enquirers to "repent" (*metanoesate*) and to "be baptized" (*baptistheetoo*) -- both aorist imperatives with ongoing significance. At the very same time, he also urged them then to expect to receive forthwith and to "keep on receiving" -- *leempsesthe*, future-continuous indicative -- the gift of the Holy Spirit. Cf. Eph. 5:18f. Thus, the sequence *metanoesate baptistheetoo leempsesthe* is here but the rapid opening up of just one parcel! As the Presbyterian Professor Rev. F.D. Bruner indicates in his doctoral dissertation: "Our text [Acts 2:38-39] teaches us that since the occurrence of Pentecost, Christian baptism becomes the locus of the Spirit' s reception in response to the Spirit' s pressure in preaching. Henceforth, baptism is Pentecost." *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (London: Hodder & Stoughton), 1970, p. 168.

6. In Acts 8:12f, the ' first-fruits' of the Non-Hebrew or rather Half-Hebrew Samaritans (said that they) believed. Consequently, they "were baptized" by Philip. Yet God still (for a very good reason) withheld the immediate ' falling' of His Spirit upon them -- until the apostles could come as witnesses to effect this themselves (8:14-18). Even that ' Spirit-falling' is not stated to be a Spirit-baptism; indeed, the latter already seems to have been given them at their recent water-baptism (8:12). Unusually, ' not yet[*udepoo*] had the Holy Spirit fallen on any of them' (8:16). "The meaning," writes Bruner (*op. cit.*, p. 177), "is this: The Spirit *is* to come with baptism; but this coming had ' not yet occurred. The relation of baptism to the Spirit -- the ' not yet' indicates -- is the relation of cohesion." It pleased God here surprisingly to delay the Spirit' s falling on the Samaritans. Thus the apostles themselves could first arrive there and become thoroughly convinced that such converts too indeed belonged inside the Church Visible! Perhaps the Samaritans, too, miraculously uttered foreign languages? At any rate, water-baptism underlies not only Acts 8:18 but also the somewhat similar 19:6 and Heb. 6:2.

7. It is just possible that in Acts 8:27-39 something similar happened at the water-baptism of the ' first-fruitconvert from the Hamites. Cf. Gen. 10:1,6f & Ps. 87:4. "A man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians..., had come to Jerusalem for to worship.... They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." Here, the Western Text has: "Philip baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord fell upon the eunuch" etc. Cf. Bruce *op. cit.* at Acts 8:39.

8. In Acts 10 & 11, we have the water-baptism etc. of the ' first-fruits' of the Japhethites [cf. Gen. 10:1f & I Pet. 3:20f]. Note that at Acts 10:37f, Peter tells the household of Cornelius: "That Word, I say, you know -- which was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth [at His water-baptism!] with the Holy Spirit and with power." Peter could here say "you know" to the household of Cornelius. For Peter saw they were already regenerate before the apostle had arrived there (10:2-4f). Thus

Calvin' *Commentary on Acts* at 10:2-4,22,25,44.

9. At 10:44, while Peter was still speaking these words, "the Holy Spirit fell on all of them (*epesen*). Then, 10:45, the Hebrew Christians there, witnessing this, were astonished --because the gift of the Holy Ghost had been poured out (*ekkechutai*) also on the Gentiles. "For" [10:46] the Hebrew Christians "kept on hearing" (*eekouon*) the Gentiles "continuing to speak in languages and continuing to magnify God" (*lalountoon* and *megalunontoon*).

10. Acts 10:47. "Then Peter answered: ' Nobody is able to keep on withholding (*heeti dunatai koolusai*) the water, so that these should not be baptized -- [these] who have received (*elabon*) the Holy Spirit even just like us (*hoos kai heemeis*)!' So he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord." By whom? Apparently by Ministers of the Word and Sacraments, who had come there, together with Peter. Acts 10:23,45,48 & 11:12.

11. We leave open the question as to whether the 10:44 Spirit-falling -- or instead only the soon-thereafter 10:47f water-baptism -- was the Spirit-baptism. Another ' single parcel' (or ' package deal')See again Bruce & Bruner, at paragraphs **4** & **5** above. Remember, however, that the Old Testament Spirit-fallings were not Spirit-baptisms! For the latter would only commence at the New Testament baptisms with water and Spirit. See paragraph **1** above. Observe too that Acts 10:46-47 (cf. 11:15-17) seems to be saying it was the 10:46 tongues-speakings or language-utterances of the Cornelian household -- rather than their 10:2f Pre-Petrine faith, or their 10:44 Spirit-infillings -- that Peter found similar to his own previous experience (2:4,7,14 cf. 11:15-17)!

12. As Bruner observes (*op. cit.*, p. 193): "The Holy Spirit may ' come' immediately prior to baptism (at least in this single instance); immediately after baptism (cf. 19:5-6); or with baptism (Acts 2:38) -- but never, anywhere in the New Testament after Pentecost, apart from baptism! The intimate connection between baptism and the Spirit, established at Pentecost (2:38-39) and dramatically confirmed at Samaria (8:14-17) --finds expression again here in Caesarea. Since it was evidently impossible for the apostles to associate the gift of the Holy Spirit with anything but baptism, the new converts were immediately baptized (10:48)." See too Calvin on Acts 10:2,44-48 & 11:16-17!

13. Several days later (10:48), Peter reported the above occurrences in the home of the Japhethite Cornelius, to "the apostles and brethren...in Judea" (11:1). Peter told the Judeans (11:15) that while he was beginning to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them (*epesen*), as also on us [apostles!] at the beginning" of the New Testament Church Visible on the Acts 2:1f Pentecost Sunday. Peter continued (11:16): "Then I remembered the Word of the Lord [1:5] -- how He said, ' John indeed baptized with water, but you [apostles (1:2)] shall be baptized (*baptistheesesthe*) with the Holy Spirit [not many days hence (1:5)]!' " Clearly, this had occurred for the apostles and brethren in Judea (Acts 11:1), once and for all, precisely on the Acts 2:1-4 Pentecost Sunday.

14. Peter continued (11:17), regarding the baptism of Cornelius' s Romans: "If God therefore (*ioun*) gave to them (*edooken autois*) the similar gift (*teen iseen doorean*) as [He gave on Pentecost Sunday] to us [apostles!] who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ -- could I be able to withstand God (*egoo tis eemeen dunatos koolusai ton Theon*)" -- by continuing to withhold water-baptism from them? Cf. 10:47. So, "when they heard these things, they were silent and glorified God, saying: ' The God gave (*edooken*) repentance unto life also to the Gentiles" -- and had indeed done so, even before Peter had met them! Acts 11:18 cf. 10:2f. On the precise nature of the "like" alias similar gift in 11:17, see again paragraphs **11** & **12** above.

15. The last case of incorporation (of the only other remaining kind of ' first-fruit'), is that of the unitarian Ephesian heretics mentioned in Acts 19:1-6. The fact that 19:1 calls them "disciples" (*mattheetas*), no more implies they were already Christians than does the same word in respect of the Pharisees at Mk. 2:18 (cf. Jh. 9:28 & Mt. 23:15). In Acts 19:2, Paul does not say these unorthodox people believed in Christ; indeed, Paul clearly doubted they had the Spirit of Christ! For he asks with some scepticism: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit, when you started to believe?" Indeed, when Paul next suggests there is no evidence of the Holy Spirit in them -- they themselves honestly admit they had "not so much as heard whether there is a ' holy spirit'*oud' ei pneuma hagion*)!" Per contra, however, the "fervent in the Spirit" Apollos, who "knew" John' s baptism -- and John' s teaching about the Spirit! Acts 18:24-25 cf. Mt. 3:11f; Lk. 3:16f; Jh. 1:33; 7:37f.

16. Seeing the Ephesian unitarians obviously had some sort of doctrine of ' baptism' (cf. the other heterodox group in I Cor. 15:29), Paul next asks them another question (in Acts 19:3). "Unto what, then, were you baptized?" They reply: "Unto John' s baptism!" This may mean: ' baptized' belatedly, after the death and exaltation of Jesus (and perhaps even after Pentecost Sunday, yet still ignorant of the Holy Spirit)! Thus Bruce (*op. cit.* at Acts 19:5-7 n. 12). Or it may even mean: ' baptized' in the name of John -- as if he "were the revelation of God" (rank heresy)! Cf. Kuyper' *De Sacramentis* (within his *Dict. Dog.* V:134f). Either way, Paul is now convinced these men were not yet Christians -- and indeed had not been baptized by John himself, nor even validly, at all! So Paul now evangelizes them (19:4), saying: "John truly baptized, with the baptism of repentance; saying to the people that they should believe in the One coming after him, namely Jesus!" Mt. 3:3-12; Mk. 1:4-8; Lk. 3:3-17; Jh. 1:29-33; 3:23-34. "When they heard this, they were baptized [for the first time ever] in the Name of the Lord Jesus; and when Paul laid his hands on them the Holy Spirit came upon them (*eelthe...ep' autois*), and they began to speak in languages and to prophesy."

17. All the various ' first-fruit' categories of converts --Jews, Samaritans and heretics -- Semites, Hamites and Japhethites -- had now been baptized by the Spirit and incorporated by water-baptism into the ' ark' of the Church Visible! Gen. 6:10-18; 7:1-7; 10:1f; I Pet. 3:18-21. On the great significance of this, see Rev. Prof. Dr. Abraham Kuyper' s great book *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941, esp. pp. 123-7). Thus, there are in Scripture no more Spirit-baptisms well-nigh accompanied by miraculous testimony in foreign languages -- after Acts 19:1-6. Instead, that was almost immediately followed by the Acts 19:9f final separation of the Spirit-completed and water-baptized Visible Church from the Spirit-depleted and unbaptized **Jewish Synagogue** (cf. Rev. 2:9 & 3:9). Thenceforth, the Spirit simply engrafts new believers into the Church Visible by water baptism. "He who has believed, and been baptized, shall be saved"; "there is one Spirit..., one baptism"; "keep on being filled in the Spirit!" Mk. 16:16; Eph. 4:5; 5:18.

18. For ever subsequently, all members of the Church Visible have thus been baptized by the Spirit into one body. I Cor. 12:13. This means baptized by the Spirit at their water baptism. It does not mean some sort of post-baptismal ' second blessing' via a waterless Spirit-baptism! Thus Luther, Calvin, Beza, Kuyper, and Bruner. See here our separate article *Spirit-ual Water-Baptism in First Corinthians 12:13*. As to be expected, II Cor. 1:21-22 has the same teaching: "God is He Who keeps on establishing us (*bebaioon heemas*) together with you in Christ; and Who [at water-baptism!] anointed us (*chrisas heemas*) and also sealed us (*sphragisamenos heemas*), after having given (*dous*) the earnest [or ' down-payment'] of the Spirit in our hearts!" Cf. Rom. 4:11; Col. 2:11-13; Rev. 7:4. As the great Australian theologian Dr. P.E. Hughes has said in his famous *Commentary on Second Corinthians* (1:21f): "In Rom. 4:11 [cf. 4:24f & 6:3-5] Paul describes as a seal [*sphragida*] the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision, of which the New Testament sacrament of baptism is the counterpart.... In the Early Church...it became customary to refer to baptism simply as ' the seal'

For Paul, his baptism...was an experience of tremendous significance.... Baptism need not and indeed should not be excluded from the picture here.... Various commentators have wished to identify the anointing and the sealing of which Paul speaks in this passage either separately or conjointly with the rites of baptism.... A more satisfactory arrangement [is] to identify the anointing...with the single event of baptism" etc.

19. The doctrine in Eph. 1:11-14, is quite the same. "We have obtained an inheritance (*ekleerootheemen*). Consequently, we who have previously started trusting (*proeelpikotas*) in Christ, should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you too [have started trusting] -- having heard [*akousantes*] the Word of truth, the Good News of your salvation. In Him you also, having trusted [*pisteusantes*], were sealed (*esphragistheete*) by the Holy Spirit of promise Who is the earnest [or 'down-payment'] of our inheritance unto the redemption of the possession purchased -- to the praise of His glory!" This promise was sealed to us especially during our water baptism (cf. 4:5 & 5:26). As Rev. Prof. Dr. Abraham Kuyper declares in his *Locus de Sacramentis* (V:128): "Eph. 1:13 is spoken to persons who first stood outside of Christ; who then received knowledge of the truth; and who then got baptized. By virtue of the mystical operation of the Holy Spirit at baptism, their own spirit has now become assimilated to that of Christ!"

20. This is further seen in Eph. 4:4f,30; 5:18,26; & 6:4. "There is...one Spirit..., one baptism (*hen Pneuma..., hen baptisma*).... Do not keep on grieving (*lupeite*) the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed (*esphragistheete*) unto the day of redemption." Constantly, now "keep on being filled in the Spirit (*pleerousithe en Pneumati*)..., so that Christ, having cleansed (*katharisas*)" the Church, "might keep on sanctifying her (*auteen hagiasee*) with the washing of water (*loutroo, tou hudatos*) by the Word (*en Rheemati*).... Fathers, do not keep on provoking your children to anger; but do keep on bringing them up in the teaching and nourishment of the Lord!"



Finally. I Pet. 1:23 & 2:5 & 3:21 cumulatively teach that baptism engrafts all believing descendants of Shem and of Ham and of Japheth into the 'ark' of the Visible Church, and thereafter requires them to keep on living in the Spirit. Note here the sequence: "born again"; "spiritual house"; and "baptism" (by 1:2 "sprinkling")! Thereafter, I Pet. 4:10f insists that as each has received a *charisma*, he must keep on ministering it to others.... If you keep on being reproached, happy you are -- for the Spirit of glory and of God keeps on resting upon you (*anapauetai*). "When do Christians first receive the sign that this Spirit is resting upon them? Surely at their water baptism! Is it not then, that the Angel [cf. the Minister of the Word and Sacraments!] seals God' s servants in the Church Militant on their forehead with the seal (*sphragida*) of the living God? Rev. 7:2-4 cf. 2:1f. The 'Great Commission' to disciple and baptize all the nations, Mt. 28:19, shall one day be completed. Then, even when they get to glory -- God' s servants in the Church Triumphant from every nation, will still wear "His Name on their foreheads" unto all eternity (Rev. 7:2-9 & 21:24-26 & 22:2-4f). "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!"