

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

A Bible Study

... He shall baptize you ...

... the Promise of the Father ...



... filled with the Holy Spirit ...

... born of the Spirit ...

Front cover illustration:

A woman prepares indigo for cloth dyeing
in Zhaoxing village



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Baptism in the Holy Spirit

A Bible Study

A Second Blessing?
For Gifts?
For Holiness?
Power for Service?
Or...
FOR LIFE!

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Introduction

When we hear someone use such language as ‘baptized in the Spirit’ (or, ‘Spirit-filled’) it must be realized that in peoples’ minds they are often talking about different things. There is a surprising spectrum of belief concerning the meaning and implications of this topic which fills a very large part of our New Testament. People from all kinds of denominational backgrounds (and non-denominational ones too) have a lot of differences of opinion as to what this is all about. However, at least many of them are agreed on one thing – they agree that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a secondary gift from God subsequent to salvation. However, Scripture can very easily be made to fit our experiences rather than the other way round!

This study sets out first and foremost to show that this precious gift from God is, above all else, for our salvation. I hope you will meditate slowly and absorb part 1 of this study and just appreciate how great is this salvation that we have been made partakers of in this New Covenant era. Part 2 of the study is self-explanatory from its heading. It deals, in brief, with what can and what cannot be taken for evidence of the Spirit’s indwelling presence. Inevitably the thinking that the baptism in the Spirit is all some sort of added extra must be addressed in a clear way too. I have endeavoured to do this in part 3 of the study, first dealing with a few Scriptures that are the cause of some misunderstanding and secondly looking at the realm of people’s personal experiences. The latter cannot be underestimated in terms of the bearing this so often has, however wrongly, upon the thinking and beliefs of God’s children.

This is a subject so wonderful that it is, in a way, a shame to have to go on to talk about this aspect of differences of understanding but I fear that unless those questions are answered some will find it more difficult just to drink in and be blessed by the uncomplicated fact that He, the Holy Spirit of God, has been sent for our salvation. Ultimately, no amount of pointing out and presenting of arguments will ever bring someone into the life-flow of the things of God in their heart. I am so acutely aware of this. I simply hope and pray that as you see brought together in this study just some of the references in Scripture to this beautiful theme we might be enabled to praise God and rejoice together over this gift above all gifts to mankind.

Part 1 – Spiritual Baptism

THE MEANING OF ‘BAPTIZE’

If you were to wander through a hall, meeting and greeting all of the people who are mentioned by name in the New Testament I wonder what subject you would bring up with which person? In this study I want to examine the question of ‘baptism’. I really want to get at the heart of this matter and, in particular, I want us to see what it really means to be ‘baptized in the Holy Spirit’. This specific term, or something very similar, is used by a number of people in the New Testament. John (the Apostle) records John (the Baptist) using such language; Luke records Jesus using the same at the commencement of the Book of Acts. It is a phrase/expression of thought that is used also by Matthew, Mark, Peter and Paul. So to which of them do we go to for help and enlightenment on this subject? Of course the answer is, all of them, and anyone else besides who might have some further insight into it all. However, due to a little prior knowledge of this topic, I think that, possibly, the best person to give us just a general introduction to the subject would be... Lydia!

We meet her in the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Acts. Paul had been very specifically led to Philippi where he encountered this woman named Lydia, and so we read:

“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized...” (Acts 16:14,15)

It is not the fact that Lydia was the recipient of a ‘baptism in water’ that day that makes me go to her as a starting point for this topic, but rather it is her place of origin and her business that is most relevant. Thyatira was an industry centre for the cloth dyeing trade and Lydia was a cloth merchant. She would know and be able to explain all about the process of dyeing cloth, which was a technique known as ‘baptizing’. Although the term ‘baptism’ had a religious usage in both the Jewish and the heathen world at this time it was also, and was possibly better known as, an industry word. It is in this simple context that we will see the foremost and obvious implications of what it means to be ‘baptized’.

This was the process. A piece of greyish, characterless cloth was plunged into a vat of specially prepared dye. The dyes would have been formulated from plants, berries and other natural substances, each according to the desired colour and depth of colour. The cloth would have to be entirely immersed and well soaked in the dye if you didn’t want to end up with a patchy garment. The fibres of the fabric soaked up the dye and took on its colour. If it were a quality dye being used the colouring would become permanent.

This is all very simple of course, but the profound illustration in it all is this: The cloth was totally immersed *into* the dye and the dye impregnated deep *into* the cloth. Put even more simply, the cloth was *in* the dye and the dye was *in* the cloth. This process was a common industry standard and although it would be very interesting to talk to someone like Lydia and perhaps find out some of the finer points of the procedure I believe she would quickly tell any inquirer that those are the basic facts of the matter and she might add, “Everyone knows that!”

THE LANGUAGE OF BAPTISM

Before we move on to look at some of the Bible references that mention the specific phrase ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’, I would like to point out something concerning the whole nature and language of our New Testament. One of the Gospel accounts, John’s, uses the language of baptism often in recording the things that Jesus said would come to pass as a result of the Holy Spirit coming. We will encounter quite a few of these references as we proceed through the study. After Pentecost (i.e. following the time that the Spirit was poured out on men) our Bible is full of the language of baptism. Starting with Acts 24:24 and ending with 1 Pet 5:14 the little phrase “*in Christ*” appears some 74 times (at a rough count). Not every single use of this phrase is directly in the context of stating that Christians are ‘in Christ’. E.g. we read 2 Cor 5:19 that “*God was in Christ...*” We read of the “*grace*” that was “*in Christ*”, but a good many references (more than I care to count precisely) speak of the believer being “*in Christ*.” Further to this we read also that the children of God are said to be “*in God*”. (NB. Usually where Scripture uses ‘God’ in the same passage as ‘Christ’ you can take the former to denote God *The Father*). In addition to all this we also read that the believer is “*in The Holy Spirit*”. The following are just a few random examples of all these:

You are in God

“*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ **in God**.*” - Col 3:3

“*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he **in God**.*” – John 4:15

“*God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth **in God**, and God in him.*” - 1Jo 4:16

You are in Christ

“*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are **in Christ Jesus**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*” - Ro 8:1

“*Therefore if any man be **in Christ**, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” - 2Co 5:17

“*Peace be with you all that are **in Christ Jesus**.*” - 1Pe 5:14

You are in The Holy Spirit

“*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy **in the Holy Ghost**.*” - Ro 14:17

“*I was **in the Spirit** on the Lord’s day,*” - Rev 1:10

“*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying **in the Holy Ghost**.*” - Jude 1:20

Further to this most simple and oft repeated declaration that we are ‘in Him’ – *in God, in Christ* and *in the Holy Spirit*, we also find that it is constantly affirmed throughout the New Testament that He is ‘in

us? – once again, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Below are some more random samples of Scriptures that show how frequently these phrases occur:

God is in you

*“One **God and Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and **in you** all.” - Eph 4:6*

*“...and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that **God is in you** of a truth.” – 1Cor 14:25*

*“For it is **God** which worketh **in you** both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” - Php 2:13*

Christ is in you

*“...**Christ in you**, the hope of glory.” - Col 1:27*

*“Know ye not your own selves, how that **Jesus Christ is in you**, except ye be reprobates?” – 2Cor 13:5*

*“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and **I in you**.” - John 14:20*

The Holy Spirit is in you

*“know ye not that your body is the temple of the **Holy Ghost which is in you**.” - 1Cor 6:19*

*“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the **Spirit of God dwelleth in you?**” - 1Cor 3:16*

*“Even the **Spirit of truth** ... for he dwelleth with you, and shall be **in you**.” - John 14:17*

Above we have eighteen random samples of the New Testament language concerning the believer's relationship to God. There are scores more in the same vein. Such talk of our being 'in Him' and He being 'in us' is without doubt the language of baptism. What does this show? Well, before we even begin to examine the specific references on this subject, it is clear that what we have here is the continual affirmation that we have (at some point? some how?) been baptized into God. (This is of course making the assumption that this act of God has actually taken place in your life and mine and we therefore do meet the biblical criteria for being known as 'a Christian' – more on that later). Assuming the latter then He is 'in us' and we are 'in Him'. I once spoke to a Christian who told me that he realized that the Holy Spirit was in him. I think also he realized that Christ was in him but he'd never before thought that God the Father was in him too. Well, of course, they are all one. God is One. A good meditative reading of John chapters 14, 15 & 16 will show us without doubt that it is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all Three, who come to make their abode in us. The following short excerpt from those beautiful chapters will show us a glimpse of this:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (Joh 14:16-20)

Jesus states that He is in his Father and He and His Father are one. Above he says that He is going to send the Holy Spirit to be *in* His disciples, and then he says, “**I** will come unto to you.” God and Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit have come to take possession of those who believe unto salvation. Note from the above quotation that at that time the Spirit was “*with*” the disciples but was not yet “*in*” them. Spiritual baptism was not available to them at that stage. They were *disciples only* (followers of Christ); they were not yet *Christians* (Christ was not yet *in* them).

A Quakerism!

A short but hopefully interesting and informative aside here might illustrate something of a previous generation’s thinking about the Oneness of God and His manifestation in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Quakers of old had a rather quaint way of putting this. Having observed that a person was genuinely changed in their whole manner of life and that they professed to be saved and filled with the life of Jesus, they would say of such a man, “he’s been *Godded with God*.” “Aye, indeed,” his friend would reply, “there’s no mistaking it, it’s plain for all to see - he’s been *Christed with Christ*.” Such was a way that these folk found to express what is more Scripturally known as ‘baptized in the Holy Spirit’.

WATER BAPTISM

I do not wish to spend time in this study focussing on water baptism but it seems necessary to just briefly comment on this in order that we can proceed with clarity on the subject of spiritual baptism. Suffice to say that Paul tells us in Ephesians 4 that there is only **One** baptism.

“*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*” (Eph 4:4-6)

I don’t think that any orthodox Christian would ever contest his statements that there is only *one Spirit, one God* or *one Body* etc, therefore it would be unwise to try and tamper somehow with the stated fact that there is only *one Baptism*. If the New Testament talks of a baptism into God and also talks of a baptism in water then surely one of them must be the real thing and the other just a symbol of it. A major difficulty in presenting the topic of baptism in the Spirit is that many people’s minds are so pre-conditioned that whenever they read the word ‘baptism’ in Scripture they have a tendency to immediately think of water. Be careful not to do this. If it is not explicitly stated whether the subject is water or spirit baptism then you need to meditate carefully on the context in order to see what is actually being talked about.

I do not intend to return to this subject again so I shall simply summarize water baptism like this: it is an outward sign of an inward reality. Water baptism in and of itself has no power at all to change lives. All of the water in all of the oceans of the world do not contain one drop of regenerative power in them. However, as a sign to God, angels (rebellious and faithful) and men (believers and unbelievers), all trueborn followers of Christ are commanded to be baptized in water. If anyone has serious reservations about following this most simple of commandments then I would seriously doubt that their life has yet been regenerated in the Spirit of God and it is best that they do not do it.

JOHN'S BAPTISM – JESUS' BAPTISM

All four writers of the Gospel accounts introduce us very early on to a man named John. He was a man chosen of God for a most special purpose. His mission was to announce the arrival of the long awaited Messiah. As part of this preparation he baptized people in water and this baptism was said to be for 'the remission of sins'. In other words, by a humble obedience to God in response to John's message a man could submit himself to this simple act of water baptism and as a result his sins would be forgiven him. However, apart from the method employed the end result of this was actually no different from what was already available to every believing Jew/proselyte under the terms of the Old Covenant. Forgiveness of sins was not the unusual part of John's message. What he declared about Messiah's coming ministry was the message hitherto unheard of. John drew everyone's attention to the fact that he baptized men *with water*, but Messiah was going to baptize men with *the Holy Spirit*.

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." (Matt 3:11)

Inevitably the end result of these two baptisms was going to be very different. We have just seen that the outcome of receiving John's baptism was the forgiveness of sins. As you may imagine the effect of receiving the baptism in the Spirit is going to be very much more. Shortly we shall explore this but first we shall look a little deeper into what it meant to have one's sins forgiven, and then afterward we shall see all the more strikingly how this contrasts with being a recipient of Messiah's baptism.

Under the Old Testament there was, once a year, a sacrifice made that would 'atone' for the sins of the people. The Hebrew word for 'atonement' is KAPHAR. Part of the essential meaning of KAPHAR is 'to cover'. In other words, Israel's sins were 'covered' by the sacrificial system which was able to cover the debt on the basis that at some future point in time it would actually be paid for in full. Let me illustrate this: let's say I owe you a hundred pounds. You ask me to make my payment and I say, "I'm terribly sorry. I don't have that sort of cash on me, I'll write you a cheque." I take out my pen and write on the cheque an instruction to my bank to pay you the full sum. Question: Have I made full payment of my debt? Answer: No. Full payment will not have been made until the actual money has been transferred from my account into yours. Until this *actual* transfer of cash the debt is not paid. However, provided that you trust my cheque, the debt is undoubtedly 'covered'. All of Israel's sacrifices and ceremonies and even John's baptism only ever 'covered' the debt of sin. They were all cheques waiting to be cashed. The debt was not actually paid and so the people of that Covenant could never be actually set free from their inward tie to the power of sin. Hence the whole process of atonement would have to be repeated continually. Atonement therefore could only buy forgiveness and temporary reconciliation to God.

Now, let us see the astounding words that were spoken on the day that John saw Jesus at the commencement of His public ministry:

*"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which **taketh away** the sin of the world."* (Joh 1:29)

John was declaring that Jesus was the one who was going to make the *actual* payment for all of those centuries of covered sin. As a result, from such a time as this was effected, when a contrite soul came to God in faith, his sin would no longer be merely *atoned* for but *taken away*. The payment was made at Golgotha and, just a few weeks later, this New Covenant came into force on the day of Pentecost.

If you were to read the wider context of this passage (John 1:26 – 33) you would see that there is a kind of comparison taking place here between John's ministry and Jesus' ministry. In actual fact, this is a comparison between the best that the Old Covenant can offer (for there was no greater prophet of the Old

order than John – Luke 7:28) and the New Covenant, which was about to come into place as soon as Jesus had accomplished “all things” given Him from the Father to do. So the comparison takes place: John baptizes with water, Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. The net result of John’s ministry and baptism is that sins are *forgiven* (remission of sin). This is good. The net result of Jesus’ ministry and baptism is that sins are *taken away*. This is better! The fact that Jesus came to take away our sins is confirmed elsewhere by John as well as Paul and the writer to the Hebrews – 1John 3:5, Ro 11:27, Heb 10:4 (by implication). Yes, it is true that we also read that Jesus’ sacrifice gives us the ‘remission of sins’ but this of course is a necessary part of the process of taking them away. If the sacrifice of Jesus only left us with ‘sins forgiven’ then what difference is there between Old and New Covenants except that we no longer need to sacrifice an animal? Our Lord Jesus didn’t die as a one-off atonement in order to save us the trouble of making a few animal sacrifices. He came not only to pay the debt of the accumulated Old Testament atonements but also to provide us, the New Covenant people, with something so much better. In a nutshell, John preached a baptism of repentance; this leads to the forgiveness of sins. Jesus came to declare a baptism of regeneration; this leads to a changed heart.

But in a sense this was John’s day not Jesus’ day yet. John was fully equipped for his ultimate ministry. He had walked with God as a prophet of the Old Covenant and there he was at Jordan, not only with a message, forgiveness of sins, but also with a means to baptize - water. But Jesus yet had a work to accomplish ahead of Him. He had the message, not solely forgiveness of sins but added to it, “*Go and sin no more.*” However, as yet He lacked the means of baptizing men and women with *His* baptism. It was some three or so years after this meeting with John, after the Cross, burial and resurrection that finally Jesus was able to announce – “*For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*” (Acts 1:5). At last, Jesus’ baptism was about to come upon mere mortal humans.

NB. The word ‘atonement’ is only ever used once in the New Testament (Authorized Version) and all dictionaries I have checked agree that the word translated should really be ‘reconciliation’. The word ‘atonement’ does not belong to the New Covenant era at all. This instance is found in Romans 5:1..... Further note from a reviewer: Whilst not agreeing with the use of ‘atonement’ in Rom 5:11 I’ve noticed that Tyndale* uses ‘atonement’ too. I can only think that because the word ‘reconciled’ is used twice in previous verses they/he used ‘atonement’ to save repetition. However, ‘atonement’ is not a strictly correct choice as a synonym for ‘reconciliation’ – S.C. *(William Tyndale’s translation was the forerunner of the A.V.)

PENTECOST & POWER

There are numerous other instances throughout the Gospel accounts of Jesus talking about His baptism and how that it was yet to come. E.g. a conversation that took place with the two sons of Zebedee one day:

“But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.” (Mark 10:38,39)

But skipping over all of these we will move on to that great day when at last He was able to fulfil this promise (known as “*the promise of the Father*”) and pour out the Holy Spirit upon mere mortals. I am talking of course about the day of Pentecost. As we read in the first few chapters of the Book of Acts about those things that relate to this event, we read of ‘power’, ‘preaching’, ‘prophecy’ and much more. It has commonly happened that people have become so focussed on all of these ‘manifestations’ of the Spirit that they have often missed the more central and deeper purpose of this outpouring. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon human lives wasn’t to be just some enhancement to the Christian life. Without Him there can be no Christian life. On that great occasion Peter, who was now without doubt

empowered in every sense, preached to the onlookers. What did he tell them? He told them that they too could be baptized in the Holy Spirit. This is not a reserve blessing to follow their salvation. No, the filling of the Spirit would *be* their salvation. Peter told them that this was something that God had previously promised to all who were “*afar off*.” “*Afar off*” does not denote an added blessing for Christian people but rather the means of God bringing people into His Kingdom.

This was *The Promise* spoken of throughout Scripture and Peter makes the connection with that Promise very clear Acts 2:17,33,39. Here is what just one of the old prophets had to say about it:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (Ezek 36:26).

In the following chapter of Ezekiel we read about the dry, lifeless bones that are brought to life. The grand finale, so to speak, was when the wind/breath/Spirit (all the same Hebrew word) of God came into them and they stood upon their feet. Note that Ezekiel’s vision makes it very clear that this event brought LIFE not just power or blessing.

Paul also takes up the theme of ‘*The Promise*’ in Galatians chapter 3. He says that God had promised the gift of the Holy Spirit long ago to Abraham. That is, the fulfilment of this promise would come upon Abraham’s descendants. Thank God for Paul’s sharing this revelation with us. If I only had an Old Testament, I would never have known that what God actually promised to Abraham was not so much a chunk of land for his descendants to inherit but that they would receive the Holy Spirit. No wonder we are told that even angels would love to enquire deeper into the things that have been given to man! God never made any such promise to them.

Anyhow, back to Acts chapter 2, and we read at the close of that chapter:

“And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

As a result of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit two significant things had happened:

1. The ‘Church’, which Jesus had previously talked about, had begun, and;
2. Men and women were being ‘saved’ (that is, under the new terms of New Covenant salvation).

We shall see yet more of how the baptism in the Holy Spirit is, under the New Covenant, the means of our salvation. Next however, we shall just deal briefly with the subject of membership of His Church.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

It may come as a surprise to some to be told that you cannot be a member of The Church apart from having been baptized in the Holy Spirit. We have just seen in Acts 2 that only after the coming of the Holy Spirit, first into 120 and then into another 3000 souls, that ‘The Church’ was formed. I must emphasise here that I am talking about The One and Only Body of Christ. Interestingly, there are no references in the New Testament to anyone becoming a member of a local church. It would seem that it was an automatic right of all who were born of God’s Spirit to gather with, and fully participate in, the local church.

So we have in Acts 2 the first mention of people being added to (made members of) The Church. Paul makes this point abundantly clear too. He says:

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1Co 12:13)

There is no ambiguity in what the Scripture teaches here. The only possible way to become a member of Christ’s Body, The Church, is by means of the baptism in the Spirit. There is no other way in. It is clear too that all have ‘drunk into’ the One Spirit of God. The Church simply does not have any members at all who have not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I think this point has been made now!

NEW TESTAMENT SALVATION

I have already been drawing a distinction between *Old Testament* salvation and *New Testament* salvation, so I feel I should explain a little bit more about this.

It is so vitally important that we understand the real meaning and implication of our terminology when we use the term ‘saved’. We hear all the while that, “I got saved...” and “such and such has just been saved,” but what do we mean? More importantly what does Scripture mean when that term is used? I emphasised earlier that on the day of Pentecost *New Testament* salvation began. So what had changed from the Old Testament time?

The fundamental difference is this: Under the Old Covenant a person’s sins could be forgiven him but that person, though pardoned, remained quite unchanged inside. His sins were undoubtedly ‘atoned for’ but they were not actually ‘taken away’, and neither was the overpowering sin principle within. Under the New Covenant we not only have our sins forgiven but the indwelling power of sin can be taken away from our hearts too. This latter ‘operation’ is something that the Old Covenant people only had in various types and figures; one of these types was circumcision. Circumcision and all other ‘picture lessons’ from the Old become actual, spiritual reality in the New. In the New Covenant era circumcision is “*of the heart, in the spirit*” (Rom 2:29). This complete ‘taking away’ of our sins and the ‘cutting off’ of the ‘Old Man’ of sin within us means that we can thus be made into receptacles of the Holy Spirit. This abiding, indwelling presence of God Himself was not possible under the conditions of the Old Covenant but has now been made the distinctive mark of the New. Therefore, forgiveness of sins, and even this spiritual circumcision are only means to an end. They are for the cleaning up of our human vessel in order to make us fit to be a habitation of God through the Spirit.

In the Old Testament sense, to be ‘saved’ was to be temporarily reconciled to God. I say ‘temporarily’ because it is plain that the people needed to have their sins atoned for repeatedly. Those people were therefore ‘saved’ *from the consequences of their sins*, but not from the power and presence of sin within them. So we see that in New Testament times things have moved on considerably from that position. Jesus did not come merely in order to save us from the *consequences of our sins* but He came to save us from sin itself, that is, the underlying root cause of sin in us.

The first New Testament reference to the subject of salvation tells us this:

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS (Saviour) for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Mat 1:21)

The essential, fundamental truth concerning salvation under the New Covenant is that salvation relates to the subject of the power of sin within us, not whether or not people are destined for heaven or hell - the consequences of sins committed. As I once heard it put: “Jesus did not die in order to get men and women out of hell and into heaven, He died in order to get God out of heaven and into men and women.”

God could not possibly live in a man or woman simply and solely on the basis that his or her sins have been forgiven. There must also be an actual (not ceremonial as in the Old Covenant) spiritual cleansing that takes place along with this forgiveness. This is why the baptism in the Holy Spirit is also described as being a ‘baptism of fire’.

“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” (Mat 3:11)

John Baptist’s words concerning the latter were not denoting a distinct and separate baptism from the one we are talking about here for there is only **one** spiritual baptism (Eph 4:5). In keeping with certain principles of speech in those days, a statement would be repeated using alternate words/expressions in order to emphasize a different aspect of the same one truth. The ‘fire’ part speaks of judgement (of Sin and the Old Man within us) and purification (the cleansing of our inner temple). The reality is, you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit and it *will be* a baptism of fire. When Jesus entered the temple at Jerusalem He demonstrated this holy intensity of God by casting out all that offended Him, and this he did with a most fiery zeal!

We cannot examine here all the biblical evidence for why it was Pentecost that marked the commencement of this New Testament era but most relevant to our theme we should read again these words in John:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (John 14: 16-20)

Jesus comforted His disciples by telling them that a day, *“that day,”* was soon to come when the Holy Spirit would take up residence in their hearts and, in so doing, both He and the Father would indwell them too. Plainly that could not happen while He was still bodily present with them, but His ascension to the Father was only a matter of a few weeks away. Ten days after this event Peter had no hesitation in announcing to his hearers on the day of Pentecost that this is *“that”* which the prophet Joel had spoken of – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God. This was a new era when ordinary men and women would ‘know’ (have intimate relationship with) God personally as He began to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. Jesus was no longer ‘straitened’ (restricted) as he had previously expressed. From this time forward all (potentially) could know Him *“from the least to the greatest”* (see Jer 31:31-34).

We must not think that the part of our Bible *called* ‘The New Testament’ is all based in the actual New Covenant period. The Gospel accounts show the coming of Messiah and the heralding of the New Covenant shortly to be made in His blood. John’s baptism denoted a kind of transitional phase as this was neither the strictly correct procedure for the Old, and by his own admission he, and his ministry, were shortly to pale into insignificance now that Israel’s Messiah was manifestly on the scene. We must never make the mistake of thinking that the disciples in the Gospel records were ‘Christians’. They had not yet the nature of ‘Christ’ within them.

A fuller comparison between Old and New needs to be studied separately. We cannot unfortunately cover all of this now, but the essential difference where sin is concerned is what I want us to see here:

Old = sins forgiven, you’re on the way to heaven – hallelujah!

New = sins taken away, God is coming from heaven into you – astounding!!

SINLESS PERFECTION

Now just in case anyone begins to leap from his seat and say, “Oh! He’s preaching sinless perfection!” I will just make it clear where we are, and where we are not going. As I understand it, there is a teaching that states that somehow or other it is quite possible for a Christian to reach a state where one cannot sin. The New Testament does not teach this, but it does teach that we are set free from the power of indwelling sin and we can and are intended by God to live without it.

The following Scriptures taken from 1 John should hopefully sum up the New Testament position on sin:

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.” (1John 3:5,6)

Clearly, if the root cause of sin has been initially taken away from us (Rom 6:1-7) and following this we abide in the life of Christ, then we do not sin.

John also answers our question of, “But what if I do sin?”

*“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And **if** any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* (1John 2:1)

Here, ‘if’ denotes that sin can still occur if either of the two conditions above (baptism into Christ and thereafter abiding in Him) are not met. If we do sin Jesus will still intercede for us and we will be forgiven.

Now this all leads to some basic Christian analysis. How many who claim to be Christians struggle constantly with sin of some sort or the other? I am not talking about an out of the ordinary occasion here and there; I am talking of a besetting condition from which someone, apparently, cannot get free. So what is the remedy? It is simple; there are only two possible reasons and only two possible remedies. Continually confessing how terrible you are, or constantly asking some other man or woman to pray for you is not the solution. The diagnosis is simple; the remedy is plain:

Diagnosis 1: Despite your own conceptions and those of all the well-meaning folk in your church or elsewhere, you have never been born again; the root of sin still dwells within you. That spiritual operation of circumcision, which is a vital aspect of spiritual baptism, has simply never taken place. The ‘Old Man’, who cannot do anything but gravitate toward sin, is still at the centre of your life. He has not been crucified; he has not been deposed.

Diagnosis 2: Assuming that this radical work of God has taken place in you and you have without doubt experienced this ‘cutting off’ of the Old Man of sin within, why should there still be this constant struggle? John tells us that it is not only he who is *born of God* that is freed from sin but it is he that thereafter *abides* in Him. Sanctification (living holy lives) springs from both an event and a process. If you have truly entered into Christ by this mighty baptism of God and yet seem to continually meet with the failure of sin it is because you simply have not yet learnt how to abide in him moment by moment.

The ‘cure’ should be self explanatory in both of the above cases. You must be born again and you must thereafter ‘walk’ every day in that quickening fellowship with Christ. This latter aspect of our Christian lives will fill much of our thought, speech etc. for those who are truly born again. We cannot take time to look at this now but I would encourage you to make a careful reading of Romans chapter 8 and elsewhere in the New Testament and note the difference between the statements that talk of being ‘in’ the flesh and walking ‘after’ the flesh. The person who has passed through the Romans 6 experience is no longer *in the flesh*. That is, his central life-source within is no longer his own self; it is Christ. However, that does

not mean that a person cannot still pursue his life *after the flesh*, that is, live after all the former manner of thinking and acting that one has acquired as a result of living in this sin-infected world.

Once again this whole topic requires extra attention that I cannot give to it now, but I trust that we shall see how all of this is so central to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

THE BAPTISM IS FOR LIFE

It has been mentioned earlier that in connection with the baptism of the Holy Spirit we read of people being endowed with power (ability to serve God) and given gifts such as tongues, prophecy, miraculous healings and more. This is all wonderful and to be prized. However, we must be careful to realize that all such enablings have been, and indeed can be, imparted by God quite apart from the baptism. Old Testament prophets served God in most remarkable ways, they moved in all sorts of gifts, both oral gifts and miracles. Further to these we recall that the disciples (first the twelve then another seventy of them) were sent forth under the command of Jesus and performed all kinds of miraculous acts. Neither Old Testament prophet nor any of Jesus' disciples, whilst He still walked the earth, were Spirit baptized; for the Spirit had not then been given in this way. Even an ass (ref Balaam) was once caused to speak the Word of God on some matter! It would seem from the New Testament record that the baptism in the Holy Spirit does cause men to manifest gifts but it would be a mistake to think that such is the reason for God's granting us this baptism. What I so desire for us to take hold of here is the fact that God's primary purpose in baptizing us in the Holy Spirit is not to impart gifts and special abilities but to impart to us LIFE. Put another way, the Spirit has been given in order that we might **be**: Sons of God, members of the Church, Christians (those anointed with the life of Christ) and so on. There is no Christian life outside of His presence; there is no salvation (New Testament salvation) outside of Him.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9)

I have underlined references to *the Spirit* in the above quotation. We have already seen how that *the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God* and *the Spirit of Christ* are all one and the same. You cannot receive the Son without receiving the Father and the Spirit. Romans 8:9 alone should be sufficient to show us that we cannot belong to Christ (be a Christian) without being indwelt of the Holy Spirit. God does not withhold the baptism in the Holy Spirit as something in store for later in your Christian life. This is not intended to be some sort of 'second blessing'. We do not read throughout the pages of Scripture about the 'promise of the Spirit' as being an 'extra' to our salvation. He doesn't come upon a man or woman just because God wants them to have some special gifts and abilities. No! He comes in order that we might have LIFE.

RECONCILED, THEN SAVED

Accepting that the Holy Spirit of God has come to bring us into the Life of the Son of God, we of course want to know, "How does this process work?" Whenever a believer wants to enquire about the 'mechanics' of spiritual events, frequently the best person to explain things in this way is Paul. He took a lot of care to do so in the letter he wrote to the church at Rome. This was an assembly he had not previously visited and so it must have seemed good to him, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to write to them about the fundamentals of the Faith. So having explained to them the principle of 'faith' as opposed to 'law' and 'works' in the earlier portion of Romans he comes step by step to the heart of his message (and I would suggest that for us this is the central core of the whole New Testament Gospel).

There are two distinct elements of the message of New Testament salvation brought out in chapter five of Romans. These can be found in one simple verse:

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” (Romans 5:10)

The two elements that I would like to consider here are: Reconciliation and Salvation. The first is chiefly concerned with what Christ *has done for* us. The second is to do with what Christ *is doing in* us. Paul makes the point that all people are, by virtue of their first birth (being inheritors of the nature of fallen Adam), enemies of God. Therefore, the first requirement for our salvation is that we must be reconciled to Him. Essentially this has to do with the forgiveness of sins, which God grants on the basis of His Son's once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. The problem so often is that ‘reconciliation’ is preached as though this were the whole Gospel. It certainly isn't, and preached alone it amounts to nothing more than an Old Testament message – a kind of Old Testament salvation. Please read my next statement carefully, and I ask that you do not get offended at this point before reading on... The death of Jesus Christ alone is NOT sufficient to ‘save’ a man, that is, in the way that God calls ‘salvation’. The fact that Jesus died on a cross as a substitution for you and for me is a wonderful, wonderful part of the Gospel, but alone it is not enough to bring us salvation. Jesus' death at Golgotha brought you and me forgiveness for our sins, and through this selfless act of love we can be ‘reconciled’ (brought into divine favour) to God, but alas, it cannot ‘save’ us in the New Testament sense of salvation. But Paul goes on beyond the message of ‘forgiveness of sins’ and tells us what can, and shall, ‘save’ us... it is His *Life in us*... not His *death for us*. Here, I am sad to say, I have noted a serious failure in the traditional ‘evangelical’ Gospel. In many environments it is well understood and laboured fervently that Jesus died for you, and you can enter into the good of His sacrifice simply by faith – Amen. However, it is less often explained that no man can be saved except he be filled with His Life – literally immersed (baptized) into it through the Holy Spirit. The fact that He died *for you* will avail you little in this Covenant except He also live *in you*, and there is only one way in which God permanently takes up residence in any man or woman. “*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*” (1Jo 5:12)

DEATH, THEN LIFE

Our concern in this study is not with the reconciliation aspect of things but with the *life in us* part. We have seen that we are reconciled by His death *for us* but we can only be ‘saved’ by His life *in us*. Remember, the issue of New Testament salvation is not whether or not a man or woman is going to heaven or hell, but whether they have been saved (delivered) from the power of indwelling sin. Having been saved *from* something, namely sin, we must see that we have also been saved *unto* something, actually someone, namely God. Paul teaches us that there is really no such thing as a ‘free’ person, we are either servants to sin (and therefore the devil) or we can be servants to God. Serving ‘sin’ is essentially synonymous with serving ‘self’, or, put another way, the sin life/the Adamic life within us. This breaking free from sin/self/the Old Man (Adam) has everything to do with spiritual baptism. Paul moves on in his letter to explain some of the finer detail of what happens when Jesus' saving Life enters into a person. Romans 6:3 tells us that the Life of Christ enters us by means of a spiritual baptism. If your mindset has been pre-programmed to always, or firstly, associate this word ‘baptism’ with water, you will immediately start thinking of such when you read this verse. However, Paul does not leave this point open to misinterpretation. He tells us quite clearly and emphatically that this process all comes about by baptism into Jesus Christ NOT water.

I have already made plentiful efforts in this study to outline the fact that God, the Father, Jesus, the Son and the Holy Spirit are but One. So, when we read of being ‘baptized into’ the Spirit or into the Son it is all one and the same. The subject matter of Romans 6:3 is without any doubt that of a *spiritual* baptism not baptism in water. On this occasion it is the Son that is being emphasised because Paul is highlighting an aspect of this spiritual baptism in which we are identified with something that Jesus has done.

The early part of Romans 6 furnishes us with the particulars of the effects of this spiritual immersion into Christ:

V.3 - *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?* Also v.6 - *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

The first effect of this baptism is that we become united with Christ in His death. Our ‘Old Man’ is crucified – totally, once for all annihilated, never to be resurrected again under any circumstances. The Old Man is Adam - our inherited life (or rather state of death!) that we received from him. He was the controlling force in us and the first step towards actual salvation (not just being forgiven) is his departure – for good. This cannot happen outside of this spiritual baptism from God.

V.4a - *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.”*

The second part of this phase is that ‘the dead’ are buried out of sight. He is gone, and in his case should be forgotten forever, as he no longer has any part to play in our life in Christ.

V.4b - *“that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

V.5 - *“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”*

Step three, thank God, we are not left dead, buried and forsaken. The final stage in the operation of baptism must take place. What point would there be in immersing the cloth into the vat of special dye just to leave it there? None of course. It is raised up, and behold something entirely new has been produced. The cloth has been fully immersed and so is fully impregnated with the colour of the dye. Even so, the believer is raised again but now impregnated, indwelt with the nature of Christ. He loved me and gave Himself for me and now by this miraculous act He Himself indwells me. I am in Him and He is in me; Father, Son and Holy Spirit have come to make their abode in this human but now regenerated heart.

BORN AGAIN

Such talk of ‘salvation’, ‘regeneration’, the ‘Life of Christ’ and the like may cause some to wonder. Is this not language usually reserved for a talk on ‘The new birth’ - the subject of being ‘born again’? Of course it is, and if you are not yet sure what I am saying regarding this I feel it is a good idea that I make this point absolutely clear. The ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ and being ‘born again’ are entirely synonymous terms. In the next section I will tackle head on some instances in the Scripture that are sometimes taken to show that the new birth and baptism in the Spirit must be distinct events. Further to these we will move on to the real issue in this misunderstanding which is how people interpret their ‘experiences’. Here I will just deal briefly with the phrase ‘born again’.

One reason why some people think that being ‘born again’ and receiving the ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ are somehow distinct events is simply because they are two different phrases. A simple look at the many references to these two phrases should be sufficient to show us that the centrality and effect of such is one and the same. Throughout the Bible many things have more than one name/phrase. Our God is a God of variety and the Holy Spirit in inspiring the sacred writings has given us precious insights by causing the writers to use differing analogies. In the New Testament we read about something called ‘The Church’, we also read of ‘The Bride of Christ’, ‘The Body’ etc. Are these therefore all talking about different things? I’ll give just one more example of interchangeable terms here: In the book of Acts we are told on several occasions that it was Paul’s custom to appoint ‘elders’ in each assembly of believers. In 1 Timothy he writes about the qualities needed for ‘bishops’ in the churches. Does this denote a change of practice? Or is this another order of overseers? Neither. It is confirmed quite clearly in Titus 1 that these are one and the same people (vs. 5-7). So why use two different terminologies? Quite simply, the two different terminologies allow us greater insight into the character and role these men were to have. I’ll leave you to conduct your own research on this subject.

The above instance is one simplistic example of how one man, Paul, uses two varying words to describe the same thing. When we come to our current topic, which ultimately is about spiritual/eternal life it is not at all surprising to find that different people, and on some occasions the same people, used varying terminologies/pictures/analogies in their attempt to give expression to this. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John (the apostle), John (the Baptist), Peter and Paul all use the terminology of ‘baptism in the Spirit’. But only John, and Peter use also the term ‘born again’ in their writings. Does this mean that Matthew, Mark, Luke, John Baptist and Paul had nothing at all to say on the topic of ‘the new birth’? Of course not. But their chosen terminology to describe the process of entering eternal life was different, that’s all.

Are these the only two expressions used when talking of our entrance into New Testament salvation? No they are not. Even way back in Jeremiah and the Psalms we read of a ‘new heart’ being given to men. The Hebrews writer picks up on this expression. We read also of being ‘translated’ from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. We read of ‘passing from death to life’. We read of being ‘sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise’. There are many and varied words, phrases and allusions to the whole picture of man’s salvation. We have followed this topic with particular reference to the phrase ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’; hence we have looked at the cloth and the dye analogy, which is brought to mind when using this terminology. We have considered very much the aspect of being ‘in’ Him and He ‘in’ us. Had we pursued the ‘new birth’ analogy instead we could have seen some slightly different facets of salvation. We could have considered the ‘seed’ and conception in the womb. We could have thought about the actual birth process with the blood and water and baby’s first breath. In this latter thought I believe we can see a significant correlation in these two analogies – the infants first breath. Breath, wind and spirit being but one in Hebrew thinking (the same Hebrew word is used for all three in the Old Testament). Imagine, the blood and the water, the labour, toil and pain then finally the babe emerges- he comes out ‘into’ the air and the air enters ‘into’ him – the child is then said to be ‘born’. Think about these associations as you read again this marvellous conversation between Jesus and a man of religion:

*“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water **and of the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is **born of the Spirit** is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must **be born again**. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is **born of the Spirit**.” (John 3:1-8)*

I should have added Jesus to the list above of those who use the term 'born again'. Actually this phrase can be rendered '*born from above*'. Why 'from above'? Because the Holy Spirit descends from heaven into our hearts at that moment in time when we are born of God. Look at what Jesus says above. The first birth is when a man is 'born of water'. He parallels this with 'flesh begetting flesh'. But a man's rebirth is when he is born of ... THE SPIRIT. It is impossible to be 'born again' without entering into the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit entering into you. This is the whole sum of what it means to be 'baptized in the Holy Spirit'.

Part 2 – The Evidence

THE EVIDENCE OF SPIRIT BAPTISM

In this next part of the study we must now ask the question, “How does a person know if he/she is baptized in the Holy Spirit?” And if you should determine that you are not, or someone you are trying to help isn’t, how do you get there? The latter point will only be addressed in the briefest way at the end of this section. Mainly, we are now going to concentrate on the former issue, dealing with what can and what cannot be taken seriously as ‘evidence’. I have included four areas in seeking to establish something about this. This is in no way exhaustive. There are doubtless many other valid points and observations that could be made.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

I think it is a good idea to start first of all by looking at the ‘gifts’ question; in particular, I have in mind here the gift of ‘tongues’. Much has been made of this as being the *initial evidence* in certain movements during the last century. Without doubt, God does give gifts to His children, but the question here is, can such be taken as a sure sign of the Spirit’s indwelling presence? The plain answer is no, and that for a number of reasons. We’ll look at the simple chapter and verse statement on the issue first.

On a number of occasions in the Book of Acts we read of people being ‘filled’ (*meaning in this instance ‘baptized’ – see note on ‘filled’ in conclusion) with the Holy Spirit and then immediately afterwards we read, “*and they all began to speak with other tongues.*” Clearly then, speaking with tongues *can be* a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. However, we do not always read that when such and such was baptized with the Spirit that they always spoke with tongues. For example, when Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit there is no mention that he did so. If this were intended by God to be the sign then one would expect this to be made explicit in each case. However, we have more direct verification than just this. Paul, writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, on the very topic of ‘the gifts of the Spirit’, says this:

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? (1Cor 12:27-30)

The question “do all speak with tongues?” is clearly rhetorical, it doesn’t require any answer, the context gives us the obvious truth of the matter. No, all do not speak with tongues anymore than all are apostles etc. Therefore, although the gift of tongues *can be* a manifestation of the Spirit such a gift cannot be relied upon as a consistent proof of His presence or absence.

Further to this it is important to realise that totally unregenerate people are, through various means, quite capable of manifesting any or all of these gifts. Occultists frequently claim to ‘speak in tongues’, psychics can ‘prophesy’, healings have been known to happen by means of strange ‘religious’ experiences and some people are quite capable of reproducing all kinds of manifestations by psychosomatic means. For example, if you keep telling someone to utter a few nonsensical syllables

pretty soon they'll learn to make some up themselves and will be convinced they are operating in the God-given gift of tongues! The stark fact is that tongues, and all other gifts, can be faked or performed through ungodly means.

Having seen that gifts can be operated by all sorts of means apart from the Holy Spirit it is perhaps even more important to note that gifts can also come genuinely from God but quite apart from a person being baptized in the Spirit. So far as prophecy, healing, words of knowledge and words of wisdom and so on are concerned we must remember that prophets under the Old Covenant were genuinely moved of God in many of these gifts, but none of them were 'baptized in the Spirit'. In those days God came upon a man or woman in a transient way but the Spirit was not then given as an abiding gift. God may still utter His Word in some way through and unsaved person if He wishes. If it suits the plan and purposes of God He can even speak through an ass (ref the story of Balaam) if and whenever He so desires. Therefore, not only are spiritual gifts not to be relied upon as sure evidence of the baptism of the Spirit, but they are not even necessarily evidence of a close communion with God. The church at Corinth is a good case in point.

The sound conclusion here then must be that gifts cannot be taken as a conclusive evidence of the indwelling of the Spirit of God. However, I would like to end on a more positive note concerning the gifts of the Spirit. Just because I have concluded that they are not admissible as certain proof of the Spirit's presence in a man, this does not detract one iota from the Bible message that they can be profitable for our growth in Christ and as tools to aid others' growth in the Lord. Paul said we should *"seek after spiritual gifts,"* and so we should.

On a more anecdotal note, I once heard a man describe the mouth as being like an overflow of a bath. When the water fills the bath to the brim the overflow lets out the excess. I would certainly agree on the grounds of experience that when a man or woman is filled with the Spirit of God it is very probable that in some way or other his mouth will overflow with God's abundance, be it praise, prayer, testimony or indeed tongues or prophecy. When God comes in His fullness it is quite usual that we just have to shout about it in some way – Hallelujah!

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Gal 5:22-25)

I believe here we move towards a little surer ground when speaking of evidence of the Spirit's presence. However, unlike the instantaneous manifestation of gifts, fruit is something that grows and matures in its season and therefore must be observed over time. Having said that, spiritual timescales are not exactly in step with earthly ones and some of the fruit of God's working in our lives may have already begun to develop even before the baptism takes place. For example, I would at the least expect to see in the newest of newborn babes in Christ a clear manifestation of fruit in the form of humility and repentance.

Jesus used 'fruit' as an illustration for spiritual realities a number of times, not least relevant is the following:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth

good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” (Mat 7:15 – 20)

It has been said of the Galatians quote above that because it mentions ‘fruit’ only in the singular that therefore the first, love, is the fruit and the other eight are really segments contained within it. Certainly love must always be the pre-eminent test here but it is vital that we understand what sort of love this is. Love, in the realm of the things of God, is not just an ineffectual nice feeling about people kind of love. It is a solid rock, a consistent demonstration of kindness, mercy and compassion to all men, but above that, it is demonstrated most clearly in simple obedience to the Word of God. *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”* (John 14:15)

The other eight points of course require much consideration, which we do not have time for here. I would just like to end on yet another note of caution though. Many men and women by the power of their *natural man* can, on the surface at least, behave in all of these ways. There are undoubtedly many folk who just by their natural disposition tend to be kind, loving, self-restrained etc. I believe the test comes when we see someone in pressurized circumstances. Like the olives in the olive press, when the skin is broken and the flesh crushed then what’s really contained on the inside will come forth. But, as I said earlier, fruit does have to develop, and not every Spirit-baptized child of God will instantaneously ooze with graciousness when put through the olive press!

In conclusion, the fruit of the Spirit is certainly an evidence of the Baptism in the Spirit but it is to some extent a case of ‘time will tell’.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” (1John 4:13)

“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” (1John 5:6)

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Romans 8:14-16)

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (1Cor 2:9-12)

The above Scriptures are just a few examples in the New Testament that show that if you are truly born of God then the Holy Spirit lives within you and He is more than capable of communicating His presence to you. It is one of His first functions when He comes.

We are told that the Spirit of God ‘reveals’ things to us. Let me give a bit of personal testimony here. I came to the Lord from a totally irreligious background. So ignorant was I of anything biblical that though I had heard of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and I had also heard of Jesus, yet I didn’t realise that

Jesus was the Son in the former list! A few days/weeks after I was converted I met with some good Christian people who continually expounded ‘The Way’ unto me more perfectly. Although I didn’t formerly know the detail of the Bible as I listened my experience wasn’t always, “Oh, I didn’t realise that,” but rather, on so many occasions, I just nodded and said, or thought within myself, “hmm, yes that is right.” Who was I, a babe in arms as it were, to say if what these people were teaching me was correct? I’ll tell you. I was a child of God indwelt of the Holy Spirit and he ‘testified’/‘witnessed’ within me to all that was truth. It was as though as each new thing came to my ears my heart leapt inside and said, “Yes! I know that!” Can I put that communication with God in my heart into words? I’m afraid not really. The Bible speaks of a “still small voice.” That is as close as I can come to explaining it, but all those who know the ‘voice’ of God within them will instantly relate to what I am saying here. For those who are born of the Spirit they will scarcely need much more to tell them that it is so. It is a case of “I know” that I am His and “I know” He is mine.

There are some who constantly fret and worry about whether or not they are really born of God. Often they want to know what other believers make of them. “Do you think that I am born again?” In such cases I would say that it is more likely that such a one hasn’t yet come into this fullness of the Spirit’s presence. However, and a very important point this, the devil is a liar and deceiver and will seek to upset the saints in any way he can. One of his tactics in the early stages of the believer’s walk is to try to bring doubt about their salvation in Christ. So yet again, although the witness of the Spirit is a very powerful testimony to ones own salvation, I would not like to say that this is fail-safe. However, once a believer has experienced the unshakeable testimony of the Spirit Himself ‘witnessing’ from within, there is little that will ever convince such a person otherwise. I believe that this is the most potent evidence that one can have of ones own condition. Thank God that we do not live by a ‘book religion’. As much as the child of God loves to read the Scriptures (and there is another evidence!) he is ever aware that his relationship with God is conducted first and foremost by a living presence within.

Spiritual Discernment

This all brings us to the subject of spiritual discernment. The first thing that must be said here is that God alone sees the hearts of all men and there is no such thing as the gift of ‘perfect discernment’. That is not to say that we never have any idea ‘who is’ and ‘who isn’t’ born again. We have the witness of the Spirit within if we are born of God and He not only testifies to our own condition but also at times we will have a ‘witness’ from God concerning others. I love the episode recorded for us by Luke where the two pregnant women meet, Mary and Elizabeth. Both are carrying within them a child that is a gift from God:

“And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb.”
(Lu 1:41)

The witness of the Spirit in us toward others is sometimes like this.

Using a little poetic license see Psalm 42:7:

“Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts”

People of like spirit will attract and recognize one another just as people of an opposing spirit (not necessarily words) will cause internal unrest at times. A good example of the latter is recorded for us in the book of Acts:

“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying,

These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.” (Acts 16:16, 17)

I am not saying that spiritual discernment is always so pronounced. It is usually subtle, in the depths of us. It can be evidenced in a quiet joy or a faint alarm bell sounding. Spiritual discernment must be combined with spiritual understanding. We have the testimony of the **Spirit AND the Word**. We need to grow in both together. My own personal experience is this; sometimes I meet one who believes and instantly I just recognize that he is a child of God. This is the witness of the Spirit in me. Other times I meet one who professes to be the Lord’s and I know instantly that he is not. This also is the witness of the Spirit. The third group, the ‘I just really don’t know’ without doubt counts for the majority for me! Thankfully, I have learned with time not to concern myself with the question. Ultimately only God knows in every case and primarily we just need to know for sure our own standing in God. If God puts you in a situation where He wants you to help another then He will give light concerning their condition if he needs you to know.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE JOHN

The above heading may seem almost trifling at first glance in comparison to the things we have just considered - ‘the witness of the Spirit’. How can John’s testimony compare with the Holy Spirit’s? We must remember that the Bible authors were writing directly under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Himself, therefore what they had to say about the matter is of equal importance to that inner witness of the Spirit in our hearts today. As we have just seen, the testimony of the Spirit is primarily of use to those who *are* born of God, although those who aren’t (those of an open heart that is) should be able to detect that ‘something is missing’ in themselves when they encounter real Spirit filled believers. Bearing in mind that we have long since concluded that ‘the baptism in the Spirit’ and ‘new birth’ are but one and the same, we find that John, above all other New Testament writers, furnishes us with lots of ‘evidences’ to look for. So many in fact that we will not cover these in detail but I shall outline as many as I can for your further thought and meditation.

All of the following quotations are from 1John:

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”

“But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

This then is a summary (drawn from the above plus some other New Testament Scriptures) of just some of the attributes we can and should expect from one professing to be ‘Spirit filled’:

- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Loves God.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Loves Jesus.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Loves his brothers and sisters in Christ.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Loves all others too.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Loves righteousness.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Keeps Jesus’ commandments
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Is full of faith towards God.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Is full of compassion towards his fellow man.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Keeps himself in a disciplined manner.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Is not held captive by the devil.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Does not find great attraction in ‘the world’.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Is taught personally by the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Seeks truth and shuns error.
- ❖ He that is born of the Spirit of God: Does not continue in sin (see next paragraph).

As you can see 1 John alone is packed full of ‘evidences’ of the Spirit’s indwelling presence. There are others in 1 John and many more scattered throughout the rest of the New Testament. What must be emphasised though is this; some of these things will only be evident as a believer continues to walk with God. The last one in particular causes great consternation at times when quoted as an isolated text. It must be seen in conjunction with this further statement of John on this matter:

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.” (John 3:5&6)

Note very carefully the word ‘*abide*’ above. Earlier I mentioned about Jesus being ‘The Door’ (let’s say in this instance we’ll liken this to the baptism in the Holy Spirit), but He is also ‘The Way’. The latter we will liken to our moment-by-moment walk with Him in spiritual life or, put in the language of John, *abiding in Him*. However, the sin issue cannot be underestimated as a pointer towards someone’s true state of heart. I hope that it has been clear in this study that one of the most central purposes of God’s establishing a New Covenant, and the reason why it is better than the Old, is that God can not only forgive sin, but also remove its root from our hearts by this spiritual baptism. The New Covenant does not stop at solely ‘imputed’ righteousness. It brings us into ‘imparted’ righteousness that should be seen every day of our lives in this world.

I'll leave you to meditate on these quotes from 1 John and recommend that you read the whole epistle, which is very much centred around the subject of what should be the expected spiritual behaviour of anyone professing to have the Life of God within them.

HOW DO I RECEIVE THIS BAPTISM?

First of all, I am not about to offer any slick formulas here. I would not wish to present the Gospel in this way. I do not think that it is entirely wise to simply say that if you follow these steps... then at the end of it you will be born again. This is not something that is in our power to guarantee! The A, B, C's of the Gospel, so to speak, are indeed worthy of much attention. I touched on these basics of the Gospel in a note earlier concerning Hebrews chapter six, where it speaks of "*repentance from dead works*" and "*faith toward God.*" However, we must not think that just so long as a person has said sorry for his sins and asked God to help him, even save him, that it is therefore guaranteed that he must have been born again. There may be reasons that are beyond our human sight why someone, who apparently *believes*, has not yet entered into the Life of God. God sees the heart of every man and woman and there may yet lie within a person elementary things that are being held back from God. Sometimes an individual can appear to be a repentant sinner and yet, in that person's dealings with God, it turns out that he is not yet unreservedly repentant of all that God has shown him. It is sadly the case that repentance can sometimes take place at a shallow level; a half-hearted response made in such a way that is thought to be just enough to have Jesus save someone from the consequences of his sins. That is, a person may desperately come to see the realities of hell and he wants to be saved from that and yet, at the same time, he still has a resistance to God's taking complete charge of his life. A slight adjustment of an old adage comes to mind; people often only want Jesus as Saviour but not as Lord. He will only come on the basis of complete Lordship. I know that there are many things that God brings to light after we are born again. It is only by the power of His presence within that we are able to receive grace and the ability to live in the way that he wants us to. However, there must be at least willingness in the first instance for God to take complete control over our lives. We do not always realize this when we first ask Jesus to forgive our sins. Sometimes we lack this understanding simply because those who have preached to us have only preached 'forgiveness of sins' and have failed to convey the rest of the New Covenant message, that is, the complete death to your old life and that Christ must be utterly, in actual reality, in full charge of your life. Therefore, there are a number of reasons why a person may have taken steps toward God in some measure, becoming a seed in the womb as it were, and yet he may not have necessarily been brought instantly to the birth.

I ought to make clear that equally it does not follow that just because someone makes a 'good job' of presenting the New Testament message that automatically the hearers always enter straight into the depths, as it were. The power of the Gospel and God's work in human hearts are ultimately beyond any words. A person may hear or know very little at all about the New Covenant message and yet God can just open someone's heart, like Lydia who was mentioned at the start of this study. We are dealing here with spiritual matters and although we can understand certain principles about God's work on one level, at the end of the day these things are things to be marvelled at. This is what Jesus said about the new birth:

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)

Also I need to make clear that I am not saying that there needs to be some kind of gap period between a person first 'believing' and that belief being turned into new birth. There is no reason why our first steps toward God cannot turn instantly into the fullness of salvation if the circumstances are right. Jesus has paid the price for our complete salvation and God wants to give you and me everything there is 'in

Christ'. But... He will not send the Holy Spirit into a man unless that person is ready to obey Him with all his heart.

God has His eternal plans, purposes and timing. Ultimately this gift, the gift above all gifts ever to be received in this world or the world to come, is in the hands of almighty God to bestow. The bringing forth of a newborn babe in Christ is a miraculous and even, in some ways, mysterious event (see quote above). We must never just assume that because a person has put up their hand at some evangelistic rally and has been dunked in some water that this guarantees that they are now begotten of God. To assume so, without seeing the evidences, is to lack mature spiritual insight and will prove very unhelpful to someone who yet may find themselves struggling with so many dilemmas. Telling a person who really isn't born of the Spirit of God that they most assuredly are, and exhorting them to 'live the Christian life' is nothing short of heaping condemnation on them. For it is impossible for such a one ever to 'live the Christian life'.

We must of course hear and obey those simple A, B, C's that I mention above, namely repentance *from* sin/self and faith *toward* God. However, these two alone do not make up the fullness of the New Covenant message, as we saw with being 'reconciled' and being 'saved'. Turning from our sins and trusting in Christ's sacrificial death for us (repentance and faith) only bring us as far as the reconciliation stage. Such repentance and faith must then result in 'receiving' the gift of eternal life – the Holy Spirit to live within us. We need also to hear the message of 'Christ in you', which by implication means hearing that one's own life must depart in order for God to come. You won't be able to choose your own job, your own place to live or what you do with your life. You will be sold to Him. The Holy Spirit will come and be your Master for life! Now that is a Holy Spirit message of salvation. Of course, God is so good that once He has come on the grounds of being absolute Lord and Master He frequently allows us things we might desire (but not always). He is a good Master, a kind Master, a loving and gentle Master, but he does not come into a man or woman on the basis of any provisos made by us. Without doubt He must come as MASTER. Here I think we may see something of the reason why he hasn't yet come into so many who have in all sincerity called upon Jesus to forgive their sins. Forgiveness of sins is of the Old order; those who want to be in the New must be willing to become bondservants of Christ with a readiness to be humble, contrite and obedient in all things. This is all by God's grace and enabling of course, as we do not have the power in our own flesh to live this way.

Now we shall read what Jesus and Peter had to say about receiving the Holy Spirit:

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32)

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:9-13)

If you want to know the nearest thing to a formula for being baptized in the Spirit then it is this: Repent from all known sins, trust wholly and solely in Jesus to be justified before God, be ready to obey God in all things whatsoever He shows you, and then ask Him. You may not even get as far as the last part as sometimes God answers even before we call on Him. Why? Because He knows your heart. If you have asked, and mean it with all your heart, and there is some reason why God is not permitting this at this time, He will show you the cause. In fact, I suspect that most people already know in their hearts if there is some issue, which they are holding back on. My personal opinion based on my own experience and observation of others is that often God raises a particular issue in someone's life, a kind of test case. He

doesn't reveal every change he wants to make in us right away, that would be too much for us to bear all at once. All that we are aware of that is plainly sinful in our lives must be repented of but so often it does seem that there is some very specific issue at hand. You'll know what it is right away and it is the thing that you perceive will be the most difficult situation/habit to repent from and change. It is God's test case! Let go! Obey! And then... *"ask and you shall receive."*

Part 3 - Second Blessing?

THE TEACHING OF THE 'SECOND BLESSING'

There are numerous terminologies in the New Testament that all describe in some way the salvation picture. This range of expressions should not be taken to imply that they must all be referring to different events, but rather that the gift of salvation is so multifaceted as to require many diverse explanations and analogies. Because in one place we read of 'new birth' and in another of 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' as elsewhere we read of 'regeneration' or 'passing from death to life', we need not go hunting for multiple explanations as to what they all mean. Jesus used yet another illustration of the way to salvation, He said, "*I am the Door.*" This is what all of these pictures ultimately suggest, a doorway into eternal life. However, there are a few specific instances in Scripture that some interpret to show that new birth and baptism in the Holy Spirit are somehow different events. I can understand why these instances are interpreted so, but it is largely because of a preconceived and usually inherited notion of 'second blessing'. Reinforcing this idea is something most powerful in influencing human thinking, people's experiences. We shall next examine these Scriptures and then afterward we shall examine a range of possibilities concerning people's personal experiences.

'Second blessing' is not a biblical phrase but what I want to address here is: Is it, or any other equivalent type idea, a sound biblical doctrine? Holding a correct doctrine about something does not necessarily equate with living in the life of it the way God intends, but holding a wrong doctrine about something is very likely going to affect the way you live and grow in and experience life in Christ. Our beliefs will also tremendously affect the way we minister to (help) others along the way, so it is very important that we address this belief that so many hold.

By stating that many Christians hold to some kind of 'second blessing' belief, what is it in reality that I am referring to? To give some examples it is this: Some 'groups' (denominations and/or individuals) say – first you are 'born again' and later you are 'baptized in the Spirit'. A variation on this may go something like, first you get 'converted' and later you experience a 'new birth' or 'baptism in the Spirit'. This latter 'baptism' for some is considered to be in order to fill the believer with 'the gifts of the Spirit', for others it is to give a man or woman 'power for service' and for others it is 'a baptism into holiness'; the destruction of the 'Old Man'. What is interesting in all of this is that all of them have picked up quite correctly on some aspect or other of the Holy Spirit's ministry in, to and through us. Many are the variations on the terminology used and also with the given reasons and expected results. However, I trust that you understand in some way the subject that I am on.

In this section we shall examine four incidents from the Bible (three from the Book of Acts and one from the Old Testament), which are offered as evidence for a second blessing doctrine. I do not know if there are any others of this nature. These are the only ones I have heard of in this context. Following this doctrinal examination, I then want to move on to something else that is probably even more responsible for guiding many Christians in what they believe or do not believe - experiences. The latter should never be our foundation for doctrine but we will say more when we get that far.

INCIDENTS FROM SCRIPTURE**Acts 8**

There are three incidents in the Book of Acts where we read of people ‘believing’ in the Lord but it was some time later that they ‘received’ the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The first is in Acts Chapter 8. Below are the relevant verses that relate to this instance:

Vs. 5 - 8 *“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city.”*

V. 12 *“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”*

Vs. 14 - 17 *“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”*

To take this above passage as illustrating ‘second blessing’ is a misunderstanding of a very fundamental nature. Just because someone has ‘believed’ in the Lord and has even been baptized *in water*, it does not follow of necessity that they must have been ‘born again’ (filled with the Spirit of God). These people had certainly ‘believed’, they had witnessed miracles, some had been delivered from demons and others had been healed. Following all of this excitement Philip, in obedience to the command of his Lord, baptized them all in water, but nowhere do you read that at that stage any of them were born again. Of course, you quite rightly ask, “Why didn’t God pour out the Spirit on these people immediately then? Their obvious faith in Him would suggest that there was no special reason to withhold this gift.” Under normal circumstances I would have to agree, but there was a special reason in this instance, which meant that God wanted something else to happen before he would pour out the Holy Spirit on this particular group of believers. God has His reasons and His timing, as we shall see.

So what was the reason in this instance for God’s holding back from bringing these people immediately into His Kingdom? The initial clue to the answer lies in vs. 14-17. Why was it that as soon as Peter and John went down to Samaria, God opened the gates of heaven wide and they were all then born from above? Was Philip’s Gospel somehow deficient? Not at all. He did all that was in his power to do, a wonderful work for his Lord, but the key to understanding this withholding of the Spirit is to be found in the presence of Peter at this event. You will remember how that Jesus had committed the ‘keys of the Kingdom’ to Peter (Mat 16:19). You will remember too that the apostles were charged with preaching the Gospel at Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth – the Gentiles. A simplified summary of this is: to the Jews first, the Samaritans next and then to the Gentiles. As we have already seen in this study it was Peter who preached on the Day of Pentecost. This was at Jerusalem. The Jews heard him and responded and the door of heaven was unlocked and the Holy Spirit fell on three thousand of them that day alone. Moving further on in the book of Acts, after this Samaritan incident we see also that it was Peter who was sent to preach to Cornelius and all those other Gentiles gathered with him. This was following the vision of the sheet and the revelation to Peter’s own heart that God was going to save the Gentiles in like manner. Peter was God’s chosen vessel to open the way for the Gentiles to come in. Before he went down to Samaria we only read of ‘believing’ and ‘water baptism’ but no spiritual baptism. Why? Because Jesus is always faithful to His promises. He had reserved the special privilege of unlocking the door to the Jews, the Gentiles and the Samaritans for Peter. We shall not speculate on the possible reasons why Peter was chosen for this privilege here, but we must take note that

this was the reason why the Samaritan believers could not receive the baptism in the Spirit prior to his coming.

In summary, on this specific occasion, for the sake of fulfilling a promise, God was keeping this most precious gift of His Spirit until His chosen ‘key man’ was on the scene. God knew their faithful, believing hearts and he was committed to bringing them all into His Kingdom, but He had plans and purposes about how it was all to be fulfilled.

Acts 9

I think that Paul’s conversion has been used in an attempt to illustrate that new birth and baptism in the Holy Spirit are not synonymous. We will now look briefly at his experience.

Vs. 3-9 *“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”*

Vs. 17 & 18 *“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”*

Once again there is no hint that Paul was born again on the Damascus road. He had encountered the Lord, he was repentant, he had even seen visions but God knows when best to bring a pregnancy to the birth. In Paul’s case he was, as it were, three days in the womb and then God said, it is time for you to enter my Kingdom, Paul, and he did. I can only speculate as to why God dealt thus with Paul. Perhaps he needed to go through those three days of blindness in order to learn some valuable lessons. Maybe it was a necessary part of God’s plans at that time that Paul should humble himself before a disciple of Jesus. Who knows? God may have previously promised some special privilege to Ananias. I’m sure his faith was greatly encouraged by the whole episode. God loves to involve His people in his dealings with men and women. All that we need to see here is that God came in a blinding revelation to a man and three days later that man was made a new man.

Acts 19

I think this is the last instance in Acts that is misunderstood in this way.

Vs. 1-7 *“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people,*

that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve.”

Here we read that there were ‘disciples’ at Ephesus who had not yet received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Now the term ‘disciple’ was commonly applied to the twelve who followed Jesus before He went to the Cross. It does not necessarily denote one born again. None of the disciples in the Gospel accounts were born again. We have already seen that Jesus said, to be born again you have to be born of the Spirit and the Spirit at that time was not yet given. These people were obviously ‘believers’ in some respects but there is nothing to indicate that they were as yet born again. On the contrary, there is something that indicates that they were most unlikely to be born again. They had not as yet heard the New Testament message. The end of the previous chapter shows us what they had heard.

“And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” (Acts 18: 24-26)

This lovely man, Apollos, had come to these people at Ephesus before ever Paul did. Apollos was a lover of God, a lover of righteousness, a man of faith even, but he did not know the way of New Testament salvation. He had preached to these people ‘the baptism of John’. We have covered this already; it is the message of ‘forgiveness of sins’. But Apollos preached this message in ignorance of the fuller facts of the Gospel of the New Covenant. These people responded to his message hence they received the baptism of John not the baptism of Jesus. They had faith in God and in the message of sins forgiven, but they hadn’t as yet entered the Kingdom by that “*new and living way*.”

We must not think that Apollos’ message was a false Gospel. It was simply a half Gospel. The evidence that this man was at least speaking in all good conscience from the heart is there to be seen. When Paul came and met these people they had no trouble receiving the rest of the message. They were ready and eager to enter the fullness of Christ once they heard the better Gospel. Before Paul came, they were ‘disciples’, they were ‘believers’, but they were not spiritually the children of the living God.

THE LESSONS FROM ACTS

I want now for us to see some crucial lessons from these three instances in Acts. From these we can see that all kinds and categories of people are assumed to be born again when actually they are not.

Acts 8 – The Samaritans

These were ‘believers’, they were baptized in water, they witnessed miracles, healings, deliverances from demons and they had great joy. However, they were not at that time born of the Spirit of God. They were not ‘saved’ according to the New Testament fullness of salvation.

Acts 9 – Saul

There was repentance, astonishment, trembling and fasting - but it was only until a few days after that he was born of the Spirit of God – Paul could not have been ‘saved’ until after he received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19 - The Ephesians

These people had heard some mighty and eloquent preaching. They had heard the message of forgiveness of sins and they had become ‘disciples’. However, they were the recipients of a deficient Gospel. It was not until they came into contact with the fullness of the New Testament message that they were ‘saved’.

Chapter 8 teaches us that God has global plans and purposes into which we fit. It is His Church and His Gospel; He will bring things forth at the time and place and through the people that suit His purposes. Chapter 9 shows us something similar, albeit perhaps on the smaller scale of God’s dealings with individuals. He knows how best to bring a soul through to salvation and what experiences are necessary for our edification. Acts 19 shows us something quite different; people, who are kind of half-saved, so to speak. They are sincere believers in Almighty God but, due to a deficient gospel, they have only been brought so far. My sincerely held belief is that if such folk really do want all that God has for them, then God will ensure that somehow they will hear/read/know/encounter, whatever is necessary to bring them into the fullness of New Testament salvation.

Note: If you want to see an interesting example of a totally contrasting account of salvation to those above then read about the conversion of Cornelius and his friends and family. Read the account itself along with Peter’s full rehearsal of what happened there (Acts 10 & 11). You will find such phrases as: they ‘believed on the Lord Jesus Christ’, they were granted ‘repentance unto life’, they were ‘baptized’ (in water), they were ‘baptized in the Holy Spirit’/‘the Holy Spirit fell on them’, and they were all ‘saved’ all at once!

OLD TESTAMENT TYPOLOGY

There is one other Scripture based incident that I have heard used as an example of new birth followed by baptism in the Spirit. It is taken from a typological point of view and straight away we are on unsound ground for making a case for New Testament doctrine. Not that there are not types and figures in the Old Testament, it is full of them, but always we must be grounded first in the New Testament then we must interpret the Old by the New.

This takes us to a very well known part of our Old Testament. It is the story of the exodus. Most would agree that there is a striking picture in this whole episode of a person’s migratory experience of leaving Egypt (the world’s system) and starting on a life-long journey with God. The exponent of the ‘second blessing’ belief says: Egypt is The World, the crossing of the Red Sea is New Birth, after that follows the inevitable ‘Wilderness’ time but then, finally, comes the ‘second blessing’ – the crossing of Jordan into the Promised Land. There are variants of this, but the thread that I am examining here is: Does the later crossing of the Jordan show us that there is some kind of second major event, a second baptism as it were? We have to say a *second* baptism because it is plain from the New Testament that the Red sea crossing already depicted a baptism:

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” (1Cor 10:1&2)

We have to dig a little deeper to see the baptism picture typified in the crossing of Jordan. But I have no doubts that such is there too:

“...the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.” (Joshua 3:16)

We should recognize the baptism connection in this latter crossing since we spent some time considering part of Romans chapter six, which links with this, earlier in the study. Romans six teaches us that it is by baptism (remember, baptism into Jesus Christ, not water) that our ‘Old Man’ is crucified – ‘cut off’. He is thereby removed from our lineage and a ‘New Man’ takes his place - Jesus Christ. It is abundantly clear who the ‘Old Man’ is. He is a theme of the previous chapter in Romans – He is Adam. So can you see the typological connection? The children of Israel were ‘passing over’ into the Promised Land (the Promised Land is a type of spiritual life in Christ – the ‘new man’), and the flow of Jordan, (which runs into the Dead Sea – see your Bible atlas) was ‘cut off’ from ‘Adam’. The city ‘Adam’ is no irrelevant detail, it depicts the Romans six teaching perfectly. In typological terms, we can see here a picture of spiritual baptism and some of its effects.

So now we have two pictures of baptism in the book of Exodus. As with all typology and terminology, each has its own distinct tones and aspects of some spiritual truth to reveal but it would seem that in both of these instances we do have a picture of baptism. So now comes a simple, but vital, piece of application. Do we take this all as one whole, a linear lesson, and deduce that there must be two baptisms? No! Why not? Because of rule number one. The New must interpret the Old, not the other way round. In the New Testament we are told quite unambiguously that there is only “*one baptism.*”

*“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, **one baptism**, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* (Eph 4: 5&6)

Here we have it, in the New Testament, post Pentecost apostolic teaching, in plain words and with huge force! Would any of us dare to question any of the other ‘ones’ in this list? I hope not, and so neither do we need to question the statement that there is only “*one baptism*”. (See note at end of section regarding Heb 6:2)

Accepting this as plain fact we now go back to our Exodus account and see the truth of these ‘two baptisms’. There are indeed here two pictures of spiritual baptism, but both must be showing us the same picture. As I said earlier, each may have its own special facets to show us but we would be contradicting Paul to say that we have here a picture of two *different* baptisms.

Now comes the question, “if we are not expected to have ‘two baptisms’ how come they did?” Easy, they didn’t! That’s right, we need to see that this picture lesson revolved around the events that happened to a company of people. The typology here isn’t bound up in following the exodus route and entrance into the land of any one individual. This whole episode, covering both the Red Sea crossing and the crossing of the River Jordan, is the story of two different generations.

If you have been reading the Bible any length of time you will have noticed by now how that groups of people, whether it be a tribal family or a multitude etc. is usually counted by the number of male adults. Children and women are not counted in the figure. Here is an illustration of this practice from Jesus’ day:

“And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.” (Mat 14:21)

Neither the womenfolk nor the children are ‘numbered’. The five thousand men (adult males) are clearly considered sufficient to ‘represent’ the multitude on these occasions. Such also was the case concerning the ‘numbering’ of the children of Israel following their exodus from Egypt.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house

of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.” (Numbers 1:1-3)

So here we see the criteria for being a ‘representative’ of this nation: male and above twenty years. You will see this principle repeated throughout the ‘numbering’ process that follows in these early chapters of the Book of Numbers. The point is this, when we say, the ‘children of Israel’ did this or did that, or the tribe of Dan did such and such, or the Israelites all said “.....” what we really mean in precise terms is this: All, or the majority of, the males, 20 years and upward, said or did, this or that. *They* were counted as the nation, or the tribe etc. The women and the children were not considered to be ‘The Nation’. To put it one way, women and children were not given ‘the vote’, but neither were they counted responsible for the consequences of what happened.

What did happen here makes this quite clear. You will know the story well no doubt. Moses sent out twelve spies into the Promised Land to scout around and return their findings to the people. The ‘people’ (the majority of the males over 20 years) all decided that the faithless report of the ten outweighed the faith-inspiring report of the two and so they refused to budge. “We’re not going into that place!” Instantly, they quenched the Spirit of God in their midst and the privilege that was intended to be to their blessing was taken away from them. What a fearful lesson to us! So we read:

“Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me.” (Num 14:29)

With only the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb all those who were at that time considered to be ‘the children of Israel’ (all males 20 years and over) were going to die in the wilderness during the next forty years.

What does this mean then in relation to our typological picture? It means that the generation that crossed the Jordan were not the same generation that had previously crossed the Red Sea. Had all the spies brought back a faith building report and the people said, “let us go up and take the land,” there wouldn’t have needed to be any Jordan crossing. Their location at that time (Kadesh) meant that they could have marched straight up with no Jordan to cross and possess their inheritance (you’ll need to check that Bible atlas again!). But they didn’t and a new generation had to then figuratively go through their baptism before entering the Land of Promise. There is no other way to enter into the promises of God and all the goodness of His Land. The typological outcome then: these were two different generations who had one baptism each.

Note regarding Heb 6:2

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

In this passage we read in some versions (including the A.V.) the word ‘baptisms’ – plural. For those who believe wholly in the unity of Scripture it cannot be accepted that this is a contradiction of Paul’s statement in Eph 4 that there is only “*one baptism.*” Therefore some further investigation is required. The Greek word used in Heb 6 is of a slightly different form to that used elsewhere where the translation (or transliteration) has been ‘baptism’. BAPTISMOS in Heb 6 is rendered elsewhere in the A.V. as ‘washing’ – Mark 7:4 & 8, Heb 9:10. In several other translations it is rendered in Heb 6:2 as ‘washings’ and even ‘purifying’ and ‘ablutions’. Looking at the passage with some careful meditation I think that the Hebrews writer is either talking of our washing (and ongoing washings) from sin following our conversion or, is possibly comparing the Christian practice of water baptism with similar ceremonial ‘washings’ under Old Testament rituals. It is in fact more likely that the following topic in this list of Christian basics, “the laying on of hands” is actually being used as a synonymous expression to “baptism in the spirit.” It was so often the case that the laying on of hands was present at the time of God’s imparting the gift of the Holy Spirit (however, it is clear from several instances that the laying on of hands was not always present when people were baptized in the Spirit). Bearing in mind that this passage is a list of absolute fundamentals I think what we have in summary of the first four out of the six things listed is this: 1. There must be repentance from sin, 2. There must be faith in Christ alone, 3. We need to be ‘washed’ clean from all of our sins, 4. The salvation process must then be sealed by the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Note Continued:

There is no conflicting doctrine here to that which is so sublime in Eph 4 – there is only “*one baptism*” just as there is only “*one God*.” There are many that are, and have been, called ‘gods’, but to us who know the Truth there is only one God. There may be other acts that are called baptism (including water baptism) but to us, who know the spiritual reality, there is only one actual, life-changing baptism.

INTERPRETING EXPERIENCES

Here I think we come to the most prevalent reason why so many are ready to accept a belief in a second blessing. Assuming that one is in an environment where you are taught that there are two distinct ‘blessings’, invariably as soon as something significant takes place following an initial encounter with God in some way, such a person will readily interpret that significant something as being the second blessing. I will try to illustrate some possible permutations of experiences:

Experience1 - Fred

Fred was blessed when he heard the life-changing message of the Gospel two years ago and he responded to Jesus with all his heart. God met with Him, baptized him in the Holy Spirit and Fred began his Christian walk in clarity. He was possessed of a quiet joy and was making steady progress in all things, but he had never personally experienced tongues or prophecy or any spiritual gift during that time. One night he was merrily praising the Lord in the meeting and suddenly he just filled up with the Spirit of God. The next thing Fred knew was that he was speaking out in a strange language, which he had never known before. He felt so uplifted and filled with joy.

Interpretation of Fred’s experience

Because the group of people Fred meets with are of the second blessing persuasion they told him after the meeting that he had just been ‘baptized in the Spirit’. That was their interpretation of the matter, but the truth is, Fred has long since been baptized in the Spirit but it just so happened that night that God moved upon him/within him in a way that Fred had not previously experienced and caused him to begin to function in one of the gifts.

Experience 2 - Angela

Angela was in exactly the same position as Fred. She was a fully baptized-in-the-Spirit, living member of the Body of Christ. She had been struggling for a long while with a particular besetting sin. No matter how hard she had tried it seemed as though she couldn’t get free from it. She went along in prayer and reading the Scriptures and one day God’s truth just seemed to open up to her in revelation. Maybe it was a Scripture she read, maybe it was a book, perhaps a timely comment, or even prophetic word from a friend but suddenly life seemed to turn around. She had discovered the secret of an abiding walk with Christ, moment by moment. Freed from the sin that she struggled so long with, she found a new lease of spiritual life.

Interpretation of Angela’s experience

Angela meets with a particular group of people and when she shared her experience they told her confidently that she had experienced the destruction of the ‘Old Man’ within her. They believed that Angela’s experience was the second blessing of holiness. The fact is Angela had already received that holy life of Christ within her some while ago but her new found liberty was simply due to learning to abide in that life.

Experience 3 - Geoff

A third similar case occurred with a man named Geoff. He was a Spirit-baptized believer who a little way down the road, suddenly found himself coming into a new and fresh release of spiritual power. He started to preach with a significant authority and people started getting converted through his ministry. When he prayed for people following this time they really felt the difference his prayers made to them.

Interpretation of Geoff's experience

The people Geoff meets with were beginning to say, "Have you seen the power Geoff is moving in these days? He must have been baptized in the Holy Spirit," believing that this gift is for 'power for service'. The reality is, it was just God's time to stir up Geoff in this way. God does have specific gifts and ministries to lead people into but He also has His time to open things up in this way.

Experience 4 - Sheila

The case for Sheila is very different from the others above. She had been a churchgoer for many years. She was involved with lots of the activities and was a stalwart in every way. "A sound Christian woman if ever there was one," all her peers thought. But they were wrong. She may have been a good woman so to speak, she was even a God-fearing woman, very well versed in her Bible but she had never yet been filled with the life of God. Although Sheila referred to herself as being a 'Christian', deep inside she knew that she never had the confidence and security in the Lord that some others had. One day a visiting preacher came to her church. I wouldn't like to say whether it was something more in this man than in others she had heard before, or whether it was for a different reason but that night Sheila saw the whole Gospel in an entirely new light. In fact, she saw everything in a new light. That night Sheila called out to God in her innermost being in a way she had never done before. God came and she was born again - baptized in the Holy Spirit. Following that occasion she felt quietly more joyfully and became much more interested in the detail of spiritual things. Although on the surface there did not seem to be anything very different, the change was noticeable to all knew her well.

Interpretation of Sheila's experience

None of her congregation was ever prepared to think for one moment that Sheila wasn't actually born again. They weren't much used to talking about 'the baptism of the Spirit' there either. A friend who went to another church told her that she had received the second blessing of the Spirit.

This is the most worrying case of all in my opinion. It seemed that none around Angela were able to discern the difference between someone being a 'good' 'religious' person and someone who has the Spirit of God living within them. The fact is most of the people at Sheila's church were in the same position Sheila herself was in before she was born again.

Conclusion of experiences

I could go on with other possible scenarios, but I trust you see the picture? All kinds of people have all kinds of 'experiences' of God. There are times when someone previously considered to be born again but isn't really, does enter in to the new birth. Among those who are already truly born again there are all sorts of events and occurrences that take place during our Christian lives, some of which appear to be life-changing for a second, or even third or fourth time. But our doctrine must not be derived from any of these. We have been given the God-breathed Scriptures to tell us what the facts are and it is far safer that we interpret our 'experiences' by God's word not vice-versa. The facts are: **There is only "one baptism."**

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study are simple. The ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ is one and the same as ‘new birth’, ‘passing from death to life’, ‘entering in at the strait gate’, ‘having power (the enabling) to become the sons of God’ and such like. There are many ‘blessings’ to be encountered along the way but the Holy Spirit has not been given as a mere extra, an aid to something en-route. This mighty act of God is not some sort of appendage to our salvation. He has come to bring us into The Way; His saturating, indwelling presence *is* our salvation.

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph 5:18)

The above exhortation was written to those who were already baptized in the Spirit. The need to be continually thereafter ‘filled’ afresh must ever be before us. We read in the early chapters of the book of Acts that, following Pentecost that the disciples were “*filled*” yet again. My Newberry Bible indicates that “*filled*” in the above quotation is in the present continuous tense. In other words, it is not an assertion that we only need the one-off initial baptism in the Spirit, which of course we do, but rather that we need to be continually filled again and again. Such is not to be taken as second, third or fourth ‘baptisms’, but rather it highlights the fact that, having been ‘filled’ the first time by that mighty baptism of God we can still expect to know further experiences of His outpourings. Peter spoke of there being “*times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*” (Acts 3:19)

“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” (John 7:38,39)

The continual filling of the Spirit is in perfect harmony with the picture that Jesus painted of the rivers of living water flowing out of us. As they flow out, so we must be continually filled again from the source. The source is located within every man and every woman who has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This continual process of out-flowing and in-filling is different from that initial baptism. At that first occasion a man is helpless, having no life in Him. God comes from without and enters in. The subsequent fillings are the continual rising up of the living waters, now within.

When the Children of Israel did finally enter the Promised Land they were told “*This is all yours.*” But they were also told that they had to “*possess the Land.*” Every portion that the sole of their foot trod upon would be theirs. If you have received the baptism of God then you already possess all things in Christ, but entering into the reality and experience of ‘all things’ does not all come at once.

“Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.” (John 10:7)

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6)

Jesus said, “*I am the Way...*” This study has not focussed much on our Christian walk with him ‘in the Way’ but rather we have focussed on another, but vital truth of the Lord’s ministry – He also said “*I am the Door.*” Without doubt no man can even begin to walk in ‘the Way’ unless he has first come through ‘the Door’. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is nothing less than the doorway to LIFE, eternal LIFE, LIFE more abundant. Hallelujah!