

## Baptism & the Holy Spirit

When you take the time to read the various Scriptures concerning baptism, two things become clear. #1 there is a very close association with water baptism in the name of Jesus and being filled with the Holy Spirit. These two events are seen together in the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 3, Mark 1, and Luke 3 all agree that when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended upon him. John tells us that Jesus came to John while he was baptizing in the Jordan river. John 1:32 says: "This is the testimony John gave: "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and stay on him." We also see water baptism and Spirit baptism, being filled with the Holy Spirit, or at least the evidence of being filled with the Spirit, spoken of together in Acts, chapters 1, 2, 8, 9,10, and19. There is a very close association between water baptism and being filled with or baptized with or by the Holy Spirit.

The second thing that becomes clear is that there is no regular order in regards to these two events. Jesus was baptized and then the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. Peter promised that those who would turn from their sins and be baptized would also receive the Holy Spirit. The Samaritans were baptized and then received the empowering of the Holy Spirit. This is also the pattern in Acts 19 with a group of believers at Ephesus. They were baptized in the name of Jesus

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and then they were filled with the Holy Spirit. In these cases the baptisms came first and then the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit.

But there are other cases in which it works the other way around. Cornelius and his household, for example, believed and were filled with the Holy Spirit, then they were baptized. This would also seem to be the case in the life of Saul, whose name was changed to Paul the Apostle. Acts 9:17-19 say,

*"Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. . . ."*

Although it is not completely clear, it seems most likely that Paul's water baptism came after being healed and filled with the Holy Spirit.

But whether the Holy Spirit fills one's life before or after baptism is not the issue; rather the important thing I want you to see today is that there is a connection. Taking the step of obedience in following Jesus into the waters of baptism, is a powerful thing. If you've never been

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filled with the Holy Spirit before and desire Him to fill you now, then taking the step of baptism may well open that door. We can and ought to expect that God will bless and empower those who take this important step on their spiritual journey. As said in Acts 5:32, the Holy Spirit is "God's gift to those who obey Him."

But, whichever comes first, the chicken or the egg--the Holy Spirit or baptism-- I need to tell you that I am very excited about the group of persons who come to be baptized this morning. I did not recruit any of them or even suggest to any of them that they take this step. Joe Brown talked with Matt and Leanne Hornberger about this and everybody else responded to the bulletin announcement. And, as I have interviewed each one to be baptized today, there is an obvious spiritual hunger and excitement within them. They want to take this step because of the strong and mysterious influence of the Holy Spirit already working in their lives. They want to take this step because they want more of the Holy Spirit and because they want to be empowered to serve God more effectively, consistently, and with greater joy.

As most if not all of you know, I've been somewhat discouraged with our church statistics so far this year. Income and attendance numbers to date remain lower than last year's. The

statistics are troubling, but the spiritual hunger and passion of the people being baptized today, encourage me more than those numbers depress me. Jesus ministered to thousands but He planted His kingdom with, and staked the future of His Church on just 12--12 ordinary men and a few very committed women. The early believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and they turned their world upside down for Christ. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we can do similar work in our world today.

I would ask all of us to focus on this one thing as we prepare to participate in or to observe the Ordinance of Baptism: Let us focus on being filled with the Holy Spirit. In Luke 11:13, Jesus says, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

You might pray something like this: **"My Father in heaven, You have promised to send the Holy Spirit to those who ask for Him of You. Father, I ask You now: Send the Holy Spirit upon me. Give me a new mind, a new heart, and new power to serve You. Send the Holy Spirit upon me. Amen."**

You might also consider singing the song:  
**"Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me,**

**Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Melt me, mold me, Fill me, use me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me."**

If you have never been filled with the Holy Spirit, pray that the Father will pour out His blessing upon you now. The Holy Spirit completes our baptism and gives us the power to live our lives for the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **The Fourth Street Church of God**

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Sermon for October 21, 2007

### **Baptism & the Holy Spirit**

***Mark 1:6-11;***

***Acts 2:37-39; 9:17-19; 10:44-48; 19:1-6***

Jon R. Neely, Pastor