



# **SPIRIT BAPTISM**

**in the Old and New  
Testaments  
(Not Just Acts)**

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## Introduction

When many Christians think of “Spirit baptism,” they think of the book of Acts. This is especially true of Pentecostals. And yet, there are other references to Spirit baptism throughout Scripture. This e-book lists some of those texts, along with some brief explanation.

## Biblical Metaphors for Spirit Baptism

The biblical authors use a number of different metaphors to refer to the Spirit baptism that took place on the day of Pentecost. For example, Luke (the author of the book of Acts) describes the day of Pentecost as a time when God was

- **giving** the Holy Spirit to believers (Acts 15:8)

with the result that the Spirit

- **was poured** out (Acts 2:17-18, 33) and
- **came upon** people (Acts 1:8)

and people

- were **baptized** with [or in] the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5),
- were **filled** with the Spirit (Acts 2:4), and
- **received** the Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Finally, the Spirit God gave at Pentecost was the one

- **promised** by God (Acts 2:33).

All of these metaphors refer to the Spirit baptism that occurred at Pentecost. And throughout Scripture we find other biblical authors using these same metaphors.

The biblical context of some of these Scriptures (perhaps even all them) should shape our understanding of Spirit baptism.

## The Spirit Poured Out

In anticipation of Pentecost, we find the following texts:

- Isaiah 32:14-16~ Because the palace has been abandoned, the populated city forsaken. Hill and watch-tower have become caves forever, a delight for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks; until **the Spirit is poured out** upon us from on

high, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field is considered as a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness will abide in the fertile field. (NASB)

- Isaiah 44:3-5~ For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will **pour out My Spirit** on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants; and they will spring up among the grass like poplars by streams of water. This one will say, “I am the LORD’S;” and that one will call on the name of Jacob; and another will write on his hand, “Belonging to the LORD,” and will name Israel’s name with honor. (NASB)
- Ezekiel 39:28-29~ Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will **pour out my Spirit** on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD. (NIV)

- The wider context of the above passage includes God's declaration that, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws ... I will put my Spirit in you and you will live" (Ezekiel 36:26-27 and 37:14).
- Joel 2:28-29~ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will **pour out my Spirit** on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will **pour out my Spirit**. (ESV)
- Zechariah 12:10~ I will **pour out** on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **the Spirit** of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an

only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. (NASB)

On the day of Pentecost, we find:

- Acts 2:16-18~ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will **pour out my Spirit** on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will **pour out my Spirit** in those days, and they will prophesy.” (NIV)
- Acts 2:33~ Exalted to the right hand of God, he [Jesus] has received from the Father the promised **Holy Spirit** and has **poured out** what you now see and hear. (NIV)

After Pentecost, we find:

- Acts 10:44-45~ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the



**Holy Spirit had been poured out** even on Gentiles. (NIV)

- Romans 5:5~ And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been **poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit**, who has been given to us. (NIV)
- Titus 3:5-7~ He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by **the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us** generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (NIV)

## **Given / Gift of the Spirit**

Before Pentecost:

- John 7:38-39~ “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he [Jesus] meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time **the Spirit had not been given**, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (NIV)

The *giving* of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost is naturally referred to as the *gift* of the Spirit. Regarding the day of Pentecost, we read:

- Acts 2:38~ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the **gift of the Holy Spirit.**” (NIV)

After the day of Pentecost:

- Acts 10:45-46~ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the **gift of the Holy Spirit** had been poured out even on Gentiles. (NIV)
- Acts 11:15-17~ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with **the Holy Spirit.**” So if God gave them **the same gift** he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way? (NIV)

## The Promised Spirit

In the Old Testament, God promised the Spirit. The numerous expectations begin to be fulfilled when, in the New Testament, God gave the promised Spirit at Pentecost. But even previous to Pentecost, Jesus said:

- Luke 24:49~ I [Jesus] am going to send you **what my Father has promised**; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. (NIV)
- Acts 1:3-5~ Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift **my Father promised**, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with **the Holy Spirit**. (NIV)

On the day of Pentecost, God fulfilled the Old Testament promise of sending the Holy Spirit. Peter preached:

- Acts 2:33~ Exalted to the right hand of God, he [Jesus] has received from the Father **the promised Holy Spirit** and has poured out what you now see and hear. (NIV)

Outside of Acts, after Pentecost, we find:

- Galatians 3:14~ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive **the promise of the Spirit**. (NIV)
  - The wider context of this verse is that just as “Abraham believed God” so too “God would justify the Gentiles by faith” (verses 6 and 8).
- Ephesians 1:13-14~ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with **the promised Holy Spirit**, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (ESV)

## Receive the Spirit

Before Pentecost:

- John 7:38-39~ “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who

believed in him **were later to receive**. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (NIV)

- John 14:16-17~ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom **the world cannot receive**, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. (ESV)
  - In the immediate context of these verses, Jesus explains that the “Helper” (Paraclete) will “teach” and “remind” the disciples of his teaching (verse 26). See further John 16:7-15.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached:

- Acts 2:38~ Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. (NIV)

After Pentecost, we find:

- Acts 8:14-17~ When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might **receive the Holy Spirit**, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they **received the Holy Spirit**. (NIV)
- Romans 8:15~ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have **received the Spirit** of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” (ESV)
- 1 Corinthians 2:12~ Now we have **received** not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit** who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. (ESV)
- Galatians 3:2~ This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you

receive the **Spirit** by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (NASB)

## Filled with the Holy Spirit

Regarding the day of Pentecost:

- Acts 2:4~ All of them were **filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

After Pentecost, Paul told the Ephesians:

- Ephesians 5:18-19~ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit**, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. (NIV)

## Baptized in the Spirit

Even though the biblical authors use numerous metaphors to refer to the reception of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the explicit use of the metaphor of being “baptized in the Spirit” only occurs a few times in the New Testament.

Anticipating Pentecost, John the Baptist proclaimed:

- Mark 1:8~ I baptize you with water, but he [Jesus] will **baptize you with the Holy Spirit.** (NIV)

Regarding the day of Pentecost, we read:

- Acts 1:3-5~ Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit.** (NIV)
- Acts 11:15-17~ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: “John baptized with water, but you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit.**” So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way? (NIV)

And after Pentecost, outside of Acts we find:

- 1 Corinthians 12:13~ For **in one Spirit we were all baptized** into one body—



Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (ESV)

- Note: Some Bibles translate this “by one Spirit.” Nevertheless, the Greek here is actually the same as what one finds throughout the book of Acts: *en pneumati* (“with/in the Spirit”). By contrast, in this verse the phrase “into one body” uses the Greek preposition *eis*.

## Kingdom of God

The “Kingdom of God” is not a metaphor for Spirit baptism, but Spirit baptism is connected to the coming of the Kingdom.

Previous to Pentecost John the Baptist preached about the “**kingdom of heaven**” being near (Matthew 3:2) and he explained:

- Matthew 3:11~ As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will **baptize you with the Holy Spirit** and fire. (NASB)

Jesus also connected the Kingdom of God with Spirit baptism:

- Acts 1:3-5~ He [Jesus] appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the **kingdom of God**. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit.**”

## Swallowed (Resurrection)

While this metaphor is not used at Pentecost, some scholars have suggested that when Jesus Christ returns and believers are raised from the dead by the Spirit (Romans 8:11), this will be a Spirit baptism when death is “swallowed” up (that is, baptized) in the life of the Spirit.

- 2 Corinthians 5:4-5~ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what

is mortal may be **swallowed up by life**. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us **the Spirit as a guarantee**. (ESV. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:54.)

## Conclusion

This ebook has consisted primarily of lists of biblical passages to encourage you to think through the significance of how the Old Testament (and parts of the New Testament) expects the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and how the various New Testament authors regard the significance of the fulfilment of this expectation. For example, as we have seen above, various Old Testament authors anticipate that the Lord would *pour out the Spirit*, but they have various expectations regarding what the outcome of this event will be. Furthermore, numerous New Testament passages recognize that *the promise* of the sending of the Spirit has been fulfilled, but they illuminate the significance of the Spirit baptism that took place at Pentecost in different ways.

For further discussion of the implications of the ways that the biblical authors discuss the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, consider the resources listed in the “For Further Reading” section below.

## For Further Reading

\* = Most relevant to the content of this ebook.

Blog posts:

- [Pentecost: More than Acts 1:8](#) \*
- [Spirit Baptism in Current Pentecostal Theology: Part 1 – Frank Macchia](#) \*
  - [Part 2 – Amos Yong](#)
- [Why do PENTECOSTALS care so much about SPIRIT BAPTISM?](#)
- [3 Ways People Misunderstand Tongues as “Initial Evidence” of Spirit Baptism](#)
- [Tongues is NOT the Only Sign of Spirit Baptism](#)

Academic articles:

- [Spirit Baptism and the Intensity of the Spirit](#)
- [The Holy Spirit and Eschatology—with Implications for Ministry and the Doctrine of Spirit Baptism](#) \*

Though not specifically on Spirit baptism, also see the forthcoming book:

- [Simply Spirit-Filled: Experiencing God in the Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit](#)



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