

BASIC DOCTRINE

(by George Battey)

QUESTION: Does 1 Cor 12:13 (“by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”) teach that every Christian experiences Holy Spirit baptism and does Holy Spirit baptism make one a member of the church?

The passage under consideration read thus, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13).

The baptism mentioned here is a baptism that results in men being placed into the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Which baptism resulted in men being placed into the body of Christ – Holy Spirit baptism or water baptism? To answer this question, let us examine both Holy Spirit baptism and water baptism.

HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

Holy Spirit baptism was administered by Jesus Himself. It was never administered by a human being (Mk. 1:8).

Holy Spirit baptism is a promise (Mk. 1:8), not a command. Men *receive* promises; they *obey* commands.

Notice also that Holy Spirit baptism was not for the purpose of saving men from their sins. It was promised to men who were already saved from their sins. “For John truly baptized with water, but you [apostles] shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5). The apostles were already saved, so this passage clearly demonstrates Holy Spirit baptism was not for the purpose of saving people from sin. Instead, Holy Spirit baptism was for the purpose of empowering men to work miracles (Acts 1:8). The purpose of miraculous power was to confirm the message preached by the apostles (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:4). After all, since the apostles were teaching a new doctrine (Acts 17:19), they needed proof to clearly demonstrate God was the source of the doctrine.

Finally, Holy Spirit baptism occurred only twice in the scriptures. Not all Christians experienced this. “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon [the gentiles], as upon us **at the beginning**. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 11:15-16). Peter did not say, “The Holy Spirit fell on the gentiles just like He falls upon every

single person that is saved.” Instead, Peter had to refer all the way back to “the beginning” (Pentecost) in order to find a previous example of Holy Spirit baptism. Since Holy Spirit baptism was not for the purpose of saving men, not everyone received this baptism. However, the baptism mentioned in 1 Cor 12:13 is something all Christians experience – “by one Spirit *we were all* baptized into one body,” the scripture says.

In summary, here’s what we know about Holy Spirit baptism:

- It was administered by the Lord Jesus Himself – not by any man.
- It was a promise, not a command.
- It was for people who were already saved.
- It empowered men with miraculous ability to confirm the divine origin of the gospel message.
- Only a few people ever experienced Holy Spirit baptism.

WATER BAPTISM

In contrast with Holy Spirit baptism, water baptism is administered by men and is designed to place men into a relationship with the Lord. Notice: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). Here it is clearly evident that men are made disciples of the Lord by being baptized in water. How do we know this refers to water baptism rather than Holy Spirit baptism? Because the baptism of Mt 28:19 is administered by men and is therefore water baptism.

Look now at the following passage: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk 16:15-16). Notice four things about the baptism of this passage:

- **This is a baptism which is administered by men.** Holy Spirit baptism is administered only by the Lord.
- **This baptism is a command to be obeyed.** Holy Spirit baptism is a promise to be received.
- **This baptism was for everyone who believed** and wanted to become saved.
- **This baptism in water saves men.** Holy Spirit baptism is for people who are already saved.

According to Mk 16:16 men must believe the gospel which was revealed by the Holy Spirit. Remember this, because it will prove very important in a moment.

“Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Notice the same four things about this passage:

- **This baptism would be administered by men** – therefore this could not be Holy Spirit baptism.
- **This baptism is a command, not a promise** – therefore this cannot be Holy Spirit baptism.
- **This baptism was for everyone** who repented and wanted to have remission of sins.
- **The baptism is “for the remission of sins.”** Holy Spirit baptism was for people who already had the remission of sins, therefore, this is not Holy Spirit baptism.

What happened to all those who obeyed the command to be baptized in water “for the remission of sins”? They were all added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47) which is the “body” of Christ (Col. 1:18).

1 COR 12:13

It has been clearly demonstrated that water baptism is (a) the act of obedience which saves a man from his sins, (b) places him into the body of Christ, and (c) is commanded of everyone. Holy Spirit baptism was not for everyone and never saved anyone, but the baptism mentioned in 1 Cor 12:13 was for everyone. The baptism of 1 Cor 12:13 placed all who obeyed it into the body of Christ and Acts 2:41 and 47 clearly demonstrates this is water baptism.

Recall the original text: “For by *one Spirit* we were all *baptized* into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13). Since baptism here clearly refers to water baptism, we have two things involved in man’s conversion: (a) the Holy Spirit, and (b) water baptism. This should not surprise us, because Jesus said, “Unless one is born *of water* and *the Spirit*, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:5). Being born “of water” refers to baptism in water. Being born “of the Spirit” means believing and submitting to the word of God revealed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would reveal the terms of salvation (Jn 20:22-23) and those revealed instructions would save men from sin (Ja 1:21). “Having been *born again*, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, *through the word of God* which lives and abides forever” (1 Pet 1:23).

CONCLUSION

Men must (a) believe the gospel revealed by the Holy Spirit and then (b) submit to water baptism for the remission of sins. By doing this they are added to the body of Christ. This fits exactly with what Jesus taught in Mk 16:16 where we are told that men must (a) believe what was revealed by the Spirit and then (b) be baptized in water to be saved.