

Ask Anything

“Baptists, Baptism of the Spirit, & Speaking in Tongues”

Selected Texts

Delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic via Livestream and to an under 50 gathering at Central Baptist Church on September 27, 2020

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** Today we are continuing in our Ask Anything series. This past summer you submitted your questions and then you voted on the top 10 questions you wanted to hear about. Right near the top of the votes were questions about the Holy Spirit.
 - Here are the big three questions you asked: **(SHOW SLIDE 2)** **First, what does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit? Second, why are certain spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues not considered relevant/active in the Baptist denomination? Third, why does it seem as though there isn't very much talk of the Holy Spirit's help/work/power?**
- I am praying that parts of this message will clear up controversy and misunderstanding. I praying that other parts will expand your understanding of what the Holy Spirit does. And by the end—and I can't wait for the last point—I am praying that this sermon will create a hunger in us for more of God's presence in our lives through the Holy Spirit.
 - A hunger that cries out for God to pour out His Spirit on us.

BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

- So, let's start with some of the controversial stuff. Here's the first question: **(SHOW SLIDE 3)** **what does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?**
 - The controversy on what it means to be baptized in the Spirit started in the beginning of the 20th century when a new teaching about it arose out of Pentecostal churches. This new teaching is referred to as “Second Blessing theology.”
- **(SHOW SLIDE 4)** **What is Second Blessing theology?** It has four key ideas.
 - First, **(SHOW SLIDE 5)** **there is a second experience of the Holy Spirit called “the baptism of the Spirit” that occurs after a person becomes a Christian.**
 - So, Second Blessing theology says that although the Holy Spirit indwells all Christians, not all Christians are baptized in the Holy Spirit.
 - Second, **(SHOW SLIDE 6)** **All Christians should seek this second blessing/baptism in the Holy Spirit after they become Christians.**
 - Third, **(SHOW SLIDE 7)** **The purpose of this baptism in the Spirit (second blessing) is for gifting and power in the Christian life.**
 - So how do you know if you have received the second blessing? Answer:
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 8)** **The evidence that a Christian has been baptized in the Holy Spirit is he or she speaks in tongues.**
 - So every Christian needs a second experience of the Spirit after they become a Christian and you know you have it if you speak in tongues.
- Those who hold to this Second Blessing theology typically lay out their case by pointing out that although Jesus' disciples were believers *before* the day of Pentecost, it was not

until Pentecost that they received the *“baptism of the Holy Spirit.”* Second Blessing teaching then argues we see this pattern all through the book of Acts.

- The Second Blessing preacher will then apply all of this by saying, *“Christian, do you lack power in your life? What you need is to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. You will know you have this when you speak in tongues.”*
- This teaching has caused a lot of confusion and trouble in the hearts of Christians. I really struggled with this in my late teens and early 20’s. Of course, I wanted more of God’s power in my life. So I prayed and talked with many people about this. But nothing happened. I blamed myself for not having enough faith and questioned why God would withhold this if it was so important.
 - I want to save you any unnecessary grief over this.
- So, the issue is this: **(SHOW SLIDE 9) does the Bible teach that all Christians need a second experience of the Holy Spirit in order to receive gifting and power in their lives?**
 - Let me give you a bunch of short points, starting where there is agreement.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 10) First, the Old Testament promised a future age when the Messiah would forgive sins and would also baptize, or immerse, his people in the Spirit.**
 - In Mark 1:8 John the Baptist says, *“I baptize you with water, but [the Messiah] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*
- **(SHOW SLIDE 11) Second, these Old Testament promises were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.**
 - Again, all Christians agree on this. Peter stood before the crowd and declared that all of this was the fulfillment of prophecy and the beginning of the new age.
 - This is where I want argue against Second Blessing Theology.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 12) Third, the gift, or baptism of the Spirit, describes a blessing received at the beginning of the Christian life (not at a later point) and is given to all who believe (not just to a few).**
 - But didn’t the disciples receive it after they believed? Well let’s come back to Acts 2 and listen to Peter’s great sermon. At the end he says, **(SHOW SLIDE 13) “³⁸Repent 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. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off. . . . ⁴¹So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:38-39, 41)**
- So follow this now. On the day of Pentecost two different groups of people received this gift of the Spirit, which is the same as saying they were baptized in the Spirit. There were the 120 disciples and then after Peter’s sermon the 3000.
 - But there is a key difference between the two groups. The 120 were already believers before this day and so, yes, they received the Spirit *after* believing. The 3000, however, were unbelievers before Peter’s sermon, became believers and in that very moment all of them were baptized in the Spirit.
 - Which group is the pattern for us today? It is the 3000, not the 120. The only reason the 120 received the Spirit *after* they believed was because the Spirit was *not* given until Pentecost. They could not have received

the Spirit because the Spirit had not yet been given. So, the 120 lived in the overlap time between the old age and the new age of the Spirit. But we do not live in this overlap time. The Holy Spirit has been poured out.

- The pattern for us then is the 3000. They repented of their sins, were forgiven, and were immediately given the gift of the Spirit. And Peter says that this promise of the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit is for all future generations as well.
 - To recap then: the gift, or baptism of the Spirit describes a blessing received at the beginning of the Christian life (not at a later point) and is given to all who believe (not just to a few).
- **(SHOW SLIDE 14) Fourth, other New Testament passages confirm that baptism in the Spirit occurs when a person becomes a Christian.**
 - In 1 Cor 12:13 Paul calls the Corinthians to unity based on the fact that they have all been baptized by the Spirit. **(SHOW SLIDE 15) READ 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.***
 - So all Christians have been baptized by one Spirit, into one body, and therefore all should live in unity with each other.
- But what about the issue of tongues? **(SHOW SLIDE 16) Fifth, although some spoke in tongues when they received the baptism of the Spirit this is not the normative pattern, even in the book of Acts.**
 - Right here in Acts 2 the 120 spoke in tongues but the 3000 did not.
- Here is the final thing to say. **(SHOW SLIDE 17) Nowhere in the New Testament letters are Christians exhorted to seek after a second blessing.** Oh yes, we must seek many experiences with God, praying for more of his Spirit's work in our life, but never are we instructed that we need this second blessing.
 - John Stott writes, **(SHOW SLIDE 18) “The gift of the Spirit and the baptism of the Spirit are the same. They describe an initial blessing (received at the beginning of the Christian life) not a subsequent one (received some time later), and therefore a universal blessing (given to all Christians) not an esoteric one (enjoyed only by some).”¹**
- The big problem with the traditional Pentecostal view is that it creates two classes of Christians. There are the ordinary unempowered Christians on the bottom and then there are the empowered Spirit-baptized Christians on the top.
 - Yet, the Scriptures never create two classes of Christians. If you are a Christian, you are fully a part of Christ, fully baptized into his body, and have the Spirit.
 - So hopefully that is a clear answer to the first question.

BAPTISTS & SPEAKING IN TONGUES

- Let's come to the second question you asked: **(SHOW SLIDE 19) Why are certain spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues not considered relevant/active in the Baptist denomination?**

¹ John Stott, *Baptism and Fullness*, 47.

- The reason is because historically almost all Christians, including Baptists, held to a view called Cessationism.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 20) Cessationism is the belief that spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing ceased after the days of the Apostles.**
 - It is argued that they existed in the early church to help authentic the gospel message before there was a completed Bible.
- Now this is something you really have to wrestle with. When you read Church history you simply do not find people speaking in tongues. This is generally true for 1900 years until the rise of Pentecostalism in 1905. So we have to wrestle with why Christians for 1900 years did not do this? You can argue that the Church was wrong but you should always be careful before throwing 2000 years of Spirit led, Spirit filled teachers under the bus.
 - In our day, there are certainly those who still teach Cessationism but speaking broadly it seems that most pastors, teachers, and scholars no longer hold to this.
 - Speaking personally, I follow Baptist scholars like D.A. Carson who do not agree that tongues and prophesy have ceased but who also have significant concerns about how some people define them and how they practice them. At this point in my life I have more questions than answers. I take an open but cautious view.
- With that being said, we must be careful never to allow this issue to pull us apart as it has in day past. The reason why Paul wrote so much about tongues in 1 Cor 12-14 is because the Corinthians were making too big of a deal out of it.
 - Whenever you talk about this subject make sure you keep at the center of the discussion what Paul keeps at the centre. What is in the centre between 1 Corinthians 12 and 14? 1 Corinthians 13. And what is that chapter all about? Love for one another. Love is far more important than our views on this topic.

WHY SO LITTLE EMPHASIS ON THE SPIRIT?

- Let's come to our final question now: **(SHOW SLIDE 21) why does it seem as though there isn't very much talk of the Holy Spirit's help/work/power?**
 - I confess that I was very surprised by this question as I feel like I am always hearing Christians in our church praying for the Spirit's help and power. I was also surprised because our preaching and teaching is also filled with it. We've even done a seven-part series on the Holy Spirit.
 - I can't help but wonder if those who ask this are from more of a Pentecostal or Charismatic background and so really are asking why we don't have more focus on the Spirit's role in tongues, prophesy, and words of knowledge. I certainly don't want to be defensive or claim we do it perfectly. In fact, I am going to end with a big call for us to cry out for God to pour out His Spirit in our midst.
- I think what would be most helpful here is to do a quick study on what the Holy Spirit does. Want you to see how broad the Spirit's work is. Then you can evaluate whether or not we talk about his role enough.
 - So, what does the Holy Spirit do?

- **(SHOW SLIDE 22) First, the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus.**
 - In John 16:13 Jesus said, **(SHOW SLIDE 23)** ¹³ **When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.** ¹⁴ **He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**
 - So notice the Spirit's role is to draw attention to Jesus and all he has done. So you know a Christian or a Church is filled with the Spirit when they exalt Jesus, cherish what he has done, and treasure him.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 24) Second, the Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers.**
 - In John 16:8 Jesus said, **(SHOW SLIDE 25)** **"he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.**
 - Think of all the baptism stories over the last few years. Every one of these talks about their need for Jesus to save them from their sin. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. I feel like I am always hearing Christians praying that the Holy Spirit would convict people of sin and show them their need for Christ. Keep it up!
- **(SHOW SLIDE 26) Third, the Holy Spirit shapes believers to be like Jesus.**
 - The Spirit helps us fight against our sin. Romans 8:13 says **(SHOW SLIDE 27)** **if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**
 - Again, I continually hear believers asking for the Spirit's help in fighting their sin but again, we can always do this more.
 - The Spirit is not just helping us to kill our sin, but He is also producing good fruit in our lives.
 - As Gal 5 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 28)** **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** ²³ **gentleness, self-control.**
 - Notice that none of this is really sensational but it is really important. May the Spirit produce more fruit in our lives.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 29) Fourth, the Holy Spirit empowers the preaching of the gospel.**
 - In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, **(SHOW SLIDE 30)** ⁸ **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**
 - Again, maybe it is just me but I constantly hear believers in this church praying for the power of the Spirit on the preaching of the gospel. Of course, we need more of this but I think Baptist's do this really well.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 31) Fifth, the Holy Spirit leads us.**
 - When the church leaders in Acts 15 had to make a very difficult decision they prayed for wisdom and made a decision. In Acts 15:28 we read that this decision, **(SHOW SLIDE 32)** **"seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."**
 - Do we talk about the Spirit like this? Let me tell you, I have sat in so many committee meetings, board meetings, executive meetings, business meetings, staff meetings, that one day I will be happy to never sit in a meeting again. But let me tell you, I can hardly think of a meeting

that has not begun with prayer that seeks the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit and ends with the same.

- Now we could keep looking at the Spirit's work for another hour. This is not exhaustive. But what I hope even this has expanded your understanding of the Spirit's work.
 - But there is one last thing that the Spirit does that I want to end with.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 33) The Holy Spirit manifests God's presence to His people.**
 - Whenever we experience God's presence, that is the Holy Spirit. Have you been in a church service where you sensed God's presence? That is the Spirit. Has a Bible verse ever jumped off the page and spoken deeply to your heart? That is the Spirit. Have you felt a deeper hunger to know God? That is the Spirit.
 - Oh how I long for more of God and of his presence. I don't know about you, but my heart can so easily become cold. My prayers can become so formal. I so easily lose a sense of his glory. But in his grace, the Spirit keeps bringing me back. And oh how I long for more of this in my life, in my family, and in our church.
- I long for a great outpouring of God's Spirit—what is referred to as a revival. When God pours out his Spirit like this everything changes. The church is awakened. Lost people are saved in large numbers. Cities and countries are literally change.
 - I could tell you endless stories from history but let me give you a modern-day example. Let's talk about South Korea. In 1900 only 1% of the population was Christian.² Today almost 30% of the population is Christian. Today South Korea—a nation only a bit larger than Canada— is sending out more missionaries than any other country except the much larger United States.³ What happened?
 - Answer: the Holy Spirit came in power. Here's the story.

THE KOREAN REVIVAL OF 1907

- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 34)** In 1905 there was a lot of friction within the small Korean Church.⁴ Some of the men among the American missionaries and Korean leaders decided to set aside a men's conference in Pyongyang to seek God in repentance, prayer, and Bible study.
 - Dr. William Blair—one of the missionaries who was present— writes about the first night on a Monday: ***"That night it was very different. Each felt as he entered the church that the room was full of God's presence."***
 - All the men began to pray and seek God. As the prayer continued people's hearts grew heavy and everywhere men began to weep over their sins.
- Dr. Lee—another man who was there— writes the following: ***"Man after man would arise, confess his sin, break down and weep, and then throw himself to the floor, beat the floor with his fists in agony of conviction. My own cook tried to make a confession, broke down in the midst of it and cried to me across the room, 'Pastor, tell me, is there***

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-christianity-in-korea/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ The following is from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1966/october-11/by-my-spirit.html>

any hope for me, can I be forgiven?’ and then threw himself to the floor and wept and wept, and almost screamed in agony. Sometimes after a confession, the whole audience would break out in audible prayer, and the effect of that audience of hundreds of men praying together in audible prayer was something indescribable.”

- Dr. Lee describes a moment in the meeting that involved himself. He writes,
 - ***We were aware that bad feeling existed between several of our church officers, especially between a Mr. Kang and a Mr. Kim. Mr. Kang confessed his hatred for Mr. Kim on Monday night, but Mr. Kim was silent. At our noon prayer-meeting Tuesday several of us agreed to pray for Mr. Kim. . . . As the meeting progressed, I could see Mr. Kim sitting with the elders back of the pulpit with his head down. Bowing where I sat, I asked God to help him and looking up I saw him coming forward. Holding to the pulpit he made his confession. “I have been guilty of fighting against God. An elder in the church, I have been guilty of hating not only [Mr. Kang], but [Dr. Lee].” I never had a greater surprise in my life. . . . It seems that I had said something to him one day . . . which had given offense, and he had not been able to forgive me.***
 - ***Turning to me he said, “Can you forgive me? Can you pray for me?” I stood up and began to pray, “Father, Father,” and got no further. It seemed as if the roof was lifted from the building and the Spirit of God came down in a mighty avalanche of power upon us. I fell at Kim’s side and wept and prayed as I had never prayed before. My last glimpse of the audience is photographed indelibly on my brain. Some threw themselves full length on the floor, hundreds stood with arms outstretched toward heaven. Every man forgot every other. Each was face to face with God. I can hear yet that fearful sound of hundreds of men pleading with God for mercy.***
 - Then Dr. Lee writes, ***The Pyongyang Class ended with the meeting Tuesday night. The men returned to their homes in the country, taking the Pentecostal fire with them. Everywhere the story was told the same Spirit flamed forth and spread. Practically every church not only in North Korea, but throughout the peninsula received its share of blessing.”***
- There were many things that resulted from this. One of these was people making reparations for past wrongs they had done. Dr. Lee writes,
 - ***“All through the city men were going from house to house, confessing to individuals they had [offended], returning stolen property and money, not only to Christians, but to non-Christians as well. The whole city was stirred. A Chinese merchant was astonished to have a Christian walk in and pay him a large sum of money that he had obtained unjustly years before.”***
 - Those new Korean Christians made serious efforts to present the Gospel to the whole nation in one year. People went house to house sharing with others. The church kept growing until today.

CONCLUSION

- The greatest need of our day is not more plans, not more money, not more programs, not more methods. The greatest need of our day is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

- Oh that the Spirit of God would awaken our sleepy churches. Oh that the Spirit of God pull us out of our sin, restore relationships, restore marriages, and make his people holy! Oh that the Spirit of God would give us a desire for prayer, that it would our greatest joy, that prayer meetings would be better attended than Sunday services!
 - Oh that the Spirit of God would raise up missionaries from this church!
- I don't know God's purposes in Covid. But I do know this. The chair has been pulled out from under us. We cannot do so many things.
 - Could it be that God's purpose is to strip everything away so that we will go back to what is most simple: seeking God's face in prayer because he is all we have! Calling on him to act because clearly we cannot! Growing in his word because everything else is gone!
 - Come Holy Spirit. We plead and we ask that you would not pass us by. We plead and ask that you would have mercy on us. We plead and ask that you would move in power among us.
- I want to lead you in a time of confession and prayer.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 35) Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.**
- **(SHOW SLIDE 36) Pray for God to revive us by His Spirit in these areas:**
 1. Our personal lives.
 2. Our families
 3. Our church
 4. Churches throughout the CRD
 5. Our nation