

The Baptism *and* Filling of the Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mark 1:8, Eph. 5:18, Acts 13:52, Luke 11:8–10, Acts 5:32, Gal. 5:16–26.*

Memory Text: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (*John 10:10, NIV*).

As Christians, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Without Him, our witness will be powerless and our Christian lives nothing but a burden. We might have learning, talent, and eloquence, but without the Spirit, we cannot experience life as God intended for us to. We will not have the assurance of salvation and will not know the joy that comes from serving our Lord. We will be Christians in name only, and a Christian in name only is not really a Christian at all.

Jesus, however, wants us to live life to its fullest. He wants to give us life as it is meant to be—a life that is fulfilling and meaningful because it is rooted in the Source of all life: Jesus Christ. He is the Creator of all life, and the only way to eternal life. “‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’” (*John 14:6, NKJV*). This fullness is possible only by being joined to Him, and this can happen only through the Holy Spirit's working in our lives.

This week we will study what the Bible says about the baptism of the Spirit and what it means to be filled with Him. We will also look at some evidence that testifies that we are, indeed, filled with the Spirit.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 4.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Read Mark 1:8 (compare with Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16, and John 1:33), Acts 1:5, and Acts 11:16. What other rite of initiation goes together with the baptism of the Spirit?

In the New Testament, there are only seven passages that speak about being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Four of those passages go back to John the Baptist and point to Pentecost. Here the Holy Spirit was given to usher in the beginning of “the last days” of salvation history.

John, however, in contrast to the other Gospels, does not use the future tense when speaking about the baptism of the Spirit. Instead, he uses a present participle, indicating that this is something that has continuing validity (see John 1:33). The same tense is used by John just a few verses earlier in John 1:29, when he talks about another important work of Jesus: the taking away of the sins of the world. The ministry of Jesus consists in taking away our sins and in giving us the Holy Spirit. This twofold experience is also reported in Acts 2:38. After their eyes were opened to Christ, the disciples received both: forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. The same experience is reported about the believers in the house of Cornelius in Acts 10:43, 44 and later in Acts 11:16. Water baptism is known as the baptism of repentance (Acts 19:4). When we repent of sin and are baptized in the name of Jesus, we also receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:28–39).

In the New Testament, the receiving of the Holy Spirit and baptism belong together. They signal our new birth. In baptism we are identified with Christ, and Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can live in His power and proclaim the good news. The baptism of the Spirit is no second work of grace at a later stage in life that some associate with miraculous gifts.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul does not have in mind the unique experience at Pentecost but rather the experience of all believers. He states that by one Spirit we all are baptized into one body, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. Paul emphasizes unity. The word *all* is crucial. Paul connects the initiation of all believers into the body of Christ with the baptism of the Spirit.

What has been your own experience in being baptized by the Holy Spirit? What has He meant for your life? What would you be like without the Holy Spirit working in your life?

Being Filled With the Holy Spirit

Read Ephesians 5:18, Acts 13:52, and Romans 8:9. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? How does being filled with the Spirit happen in our lives?

Once we are baptized and belong to Christ, we should live in the power of the Spirit. For this to happen we have to be filled with the Spirit. There are numerous references in the New Testament where people are filled with the Spirit (*Luke 1:41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9*). The apostle Paul uses the word *filling* to say that a person has submitted completely to God and is open to the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit so that God's own work can be accomplished in the person's life.

If we yield to the influence of alcohol, our walk, talk, and thoughts will be affected negatively. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we yield every part of our life to His transforming influence with the result that our walk, talk, and thoughts will reflect Jesus.

While the Spirit is given by the hearing of faith (*Gal. 3:2*) and is received through faith (*Gal. 3:14*) at our baptism (*Titus 3:5, 6*), we need to seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit every day. We can't live off a powerful experience that we had last year or last month or even yesterday. We need the infilling of God's Spirit each day, for each day brings its own challenges.

In the Greek of Acts 13:52, the term *filled* with the Spirit is in the imperfect tense, signifying continuous action. It literally means: "being [continuously] filled." Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time event. It is something that we should seek and receive every day. This filling has to be repeated so that every part of our lives is filled with His presence, and so we are empowered to live as we should.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not so much mean that we possess more of Him but that He possesses more of us. Only when we commit all aspects of our life to the Spirit every day can He use us to God's glory.

"I wish to impress upon you the fact that those who have Jesus abiding in the heart by faith, have actually received the Holy Spirit. Every individual who receives Jesus as his personal Saviour, just as surely receives the Holy Spirit to be his Counselor, Sanctifier, Guide, and Witness."—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, p. 71.

Conditions: Part 1

God's Word points to certain conditions needed for the Spirit to abide in us. We will look at some important ones during the next two days.

Read Acts 2:37, 38. What is the first condition for receiving the Holy Spirit?

One condition for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is repentance. Hearing the Word of God arouses our conscience and can lead us to an awareness of our true sinfulness and lost condition. True repentance is more than just feeling sorry for the dire consequences of our sins. It is a thorough change of heart and mind so that we see sin for what it really is: an ugly evil and rebellion against God. The only way that we can experience true repentance is to be touched by the love of God: "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (*Rom. 2:4, NASB*).

Read Galatians 3:14 and James 1:6–8. Why can't we receive the Holy Spirit without trusting God's Word?

Jesus has promised to send the Spirit as His representative. In faith we receive the promised gift. But if we doubt God's promise and do not trust His Word, we are like a double-minded person and cannot expect to receive anything from God. Faith is more than intellectual assent. It is putting our lives on the line, trusting that God will keep His Word and not let us down, regardless of what happens.

Read Luke 11:8–10, 13. Why does persistent intercession make a difference?

God is not reluctant to give us the Spirit. God is good and benevolent, more than we can be even to our own children. Our persistent intercession does not change His mind. Our prayer changes us and brings us into God's presence. Prayer doesn't bring God down to us but brings us up to Him. Our prayers simply reveal our determination, and they prepare us for the gift.

How can we learn to be more fervent, diligent, and self-surrendering in our own prayer lives? Why is it important that we do learn these things?

Conditions: Part 2

Read Acts 5:32. Why is obedience to God’s Word an important condition for receiving the Holy Spirit?

Then, as now, the Holy Spirit is granted to all who obey God. In the Bible, love and obedience go hand in hand, and true faith is expressed in obedience. If we trust God with all our hearts, we will obey His commandments. Jesus said: “ ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word’ ” (*John 14:23, NASB*). Obedience is a choice leading to a lifestyle that follows God’s will as expressed in His law. We must continue in obedience if we want to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord (*Luke 6:46*). In 1 John 2:4, 5 we are told that “the one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected” (*NASB*). Those are strong words. From John we also know that “the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (*1 John 3:24, NASB*). When we do what God has commanded, we will have peace of mind.

Read Jude 18–21. Why do we need to avoid all impurity if we want to be filled with the Spirit?

The fire of the Holy Spirit cannot keep burning in our lives when we are worldly minded. The Holy Spirit reacts very sensitively to the existence of all sin and worldliness in our lives. Therefore we need to keep ourselves in the love of God and be connected with God through prayer so that we will shun all impurity and display a spirit of power, love, and discipline (*2 Tim. 1:6, 7*). Only through a close and fierce battle with self can we become the kind of people we should be. Of course, we can’t do it ourselves; the battle comes down to our choice of either surrendering our wills to the prompting of the Holy Spirit or allowing the flesh to dominate. The choice is ours.

“There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 250, 251. How can you apply these words to your own spiritual life?

Self-Centered Living Versus Christ-Centered Living

Read Galatians 5:16–26 and compare it with Ephesians 5:1–9, 17–20. List the differences between a self-centered life and a life that is filled with the Spirit.

The life of a person who does not live in the Spirit is radically different from the life and values of a person who is filled with the Spirit.

Self-Centered Person	Spirit-Controlled Person
Desires what is sinful and displeasing to God	Desires what is spiritual and pleasing to God
Is controlled by sinful passions	Is controlled by the Spirit
Misuses his/her freedom and gets enslaved in sin	Is set free from the bondage of sin and is called to freedom in Christ
Is disobedient to God's will	Is obedient to God's will
Is self-indulgent	Is self-sacrificing
Displays the fruit of sin	Displays the fruit of the Spirit
Does not recognize the need for forgiveness and is boastful of self	Recognizes the need for forgiveness and praises Jesus for what He has done

The life of a person who is filled with God's Spirit is characterized by a loving obedience to God's law and a gentle spirit of compassion for others (*see 2 Cor. 5:14, NASB*). Having been renewed in our minds and thinking and having received new hearts and a new outlook on life, our values and behavior will change. We want to live no longer in our own strength but in submission to the Holy Spirit (*Gal. 3:3*).

We cannot transform ourselves. We possess no real power to change ourselves, for sin is too deeply ingrained in us. The renewing energy must come from God. The change from within can be successful only through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. No mere external change, such as correcting this or that bad habit, makes us Christians. The change has to come from a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit.

This is the work of a lifetime, a work that will have its up and downs, but a work that God promises to do in us if we surrender to Him, "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (*Phil. 1:6, NKJV*).

In what areas of your life do you see the selfish, self-centered part come through, and in what parts do you see a life that reflects the working of the Holy Spirit in you? What does your answer tell you about yourself and the choices you need to make?

Further Thought: It is only natural for a person to seek control of one's life. We normally depend on our own efforts to achieve all that we can. While many people spend their lives in a quest for control, others have an unhealthy fear of losing control. This human dilemma finds an answer only in God. He wants you to give Him, Your Creator and Redeemer, full control. He knows and loves you as nobody else can. This opens the door for Him to work in your life. By choosing to submit your will to the leading of God's Holy Spirit, you will have His supernatural peace and boundless opportunities to be a blessing to others. But we need the desire for this power in our lives. God doesn't force Himself on any of us. To be moral beings, we need to be free beings. And to be truly free in Christ, we need a sense of *abandonment* (that of wanting to abandon our old sinful and fallen ways) and a sense of *abiding* (that of abiding in the power of the Holy Spirit). To be truly free, we must be truly surrendered to the control of the Holy Spirit. But there is no contradiction here. Our freedom is found in liberation from the condemnation and power of sin, which always enslaves us and always leads to death. Instead, by surrendering to the Lord and making way for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, not only are we no longer condemned (*see Rom. 8:1*), but we live a life where we "do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (*NKJV*). That's the only true freedom that we, as sinful and fallen beings, can ever know.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Some people think that freedom consists of being able to do what you want, when you want, and how you want to do it. What's wrong with that concept from a Christian perspective? What is the biblical idea of true freedom? *See Ps. 119:45, Luke 4:18, John 8:34–36, 2 Cor. 3:17, and Gal. 5:1.*
- 2 Why is it important to put self aside and consecrate our lives wholly to God before the Holy Spirit can work mightily through us? What could God do in you that would make you more of a blessing to others if you put self aside and opened your heart to the workings of the Holy Spirit in you?
- 3 "The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172. Discuss in class the implications of these words.
- 4 Compare the evidence of a self-centered life with a life that is Spirit-filled (*see chart in Thursday's study*). Discuss with the members of your Sabbath School group what the greatest blessing of a Spirit-filled life could be for us.

“Lord, I Can’t Find You. Please Find Me”: Part 1

Hannele tore open her cousin’s letter and began reading. “I’ve given my life to Jesus,” her cousin wrote. *What does that mean?* Hannele wondered. Hannele had sometimes attended Sunday School, but she’d never heard of someone giving his or her life to Jesus.

Hannele longed for a similar experience with God but wasn’t sure how to have it. She attended several different churches and joined youth activities, but she didn’t find what her cousin had described. Hannele bought a Bible and read it through; she did things that she thought Christians did, but still she felt spiritually hungry.

After finishing her university schooling, Hannele moved to Helsinki, Finland’s capital city. There she met her future husband. Hannele invited him to attend church with her, hoping that he would find God and then show her how to find Him too. But that didn’t work.

The couple had children, and life became busy. Hannele had everything she wanted—except God. As she continued visiting churches, she prayed, “Lord, I can’t find You. Please find me.”

Hannele’s teenage daughter decided to study in Australia for a year. Worried, Hannele prayed that her daughter would find a good family to live with—and she did. “They were wonderful!” Hannele said later. “Greg, the father, helped us set up our computer, so we could instant message one another. As we chatted, I got to know Greg and told him of my search for God. He told me that he had drifted away from his childhood church, but he suggested that I read his favorite book, *The Desire of Ages*. I found the book on the Internet and read it. It changed my life! I read it again, this time comparing it with my Bible. At last, I sensed that I was finding answers to my questions and a closer walk with God.”

Greg’s father was a former missionary who answered Hannele’s questions about God. He told her that he was a Seventh-day Adventist, but she had never heard of such a group. He explained that Adventists keep the Bible Sabbath and look forward to Jesus’ return. Hannele’s husband looked the church up on the Internet, and Hannele was reassured by what she read.

Greg told Hannele about an Adventist television station available on the Internet. She watched several programs and rejoiced to find that her life was changing for the better.

To be continued in next week’s Inside Story.

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Matthew 3:11*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Understand the meaning of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, and grasp the practical importance of this biblical teaching in his or her life. He or she also will discover the prerequisites for receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit today.

Feel: Foster a deeper desire to be filled daily with the Holy Spirit and to live with a sense of the presence and guidance of the Spirit.

Do: Seek consciously the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit through thoughtful study of God's Word.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Meaning and Significance of Being Baptized by the Holy Spirit

- A** Why is the baptism of the Holy Spirit so significant in the life of each believer?
- B** What practical difference does the baptism of the Holy Spirit make in each one of our lives?
- C** Why can't you be a committed Christian without the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

II. Feel: The Poverty of the Soul Without the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

- A** How can our feelings of weakness and inadequacy actually drive us to seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit?
- B** Why is the lack of knowledge regarding the baptism and infilling of the Holy Spirit so detrimental to our spiritual lives?

III. Do: The Joy and Strength of Living in the Power of the Spirit

- A** Why is living in the power of the Holy Spirit so challenging on a daily basis?
- B** What are some practical things we can do to prepare our hearts for the infilling of the Holy Spirit?

► **Summary:** The right understanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit leads us to sense the abject poverty of the soul without the fullness of the Holy Spirit. As we follow the practical, biblical steps to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we receive strength and joy.

Learning Cycle

►STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Matthew 3:11*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: God longs to fill His people with His Holy Spirit, even if they may not fully understand the significance of the infilling and may not clearly grasp the steps of how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The loving heart of Christ desires that we have all the benefits that Heaven offers in overcoming the wiles of the evil one and in living the most abundant lives possible. God is doing everything possible to enable us to be overcomers in the battle with evil.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson should help members of your class to be aware that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not for a select few or a small group of spiritually elite Christians. The baptism or infilling of the Holy Spirit is for all believers in every generation. When we become insensitive to the infilling of the Holy Spirit, we live the Christian life in our own strength, powerless to overcome temptation. We live in frustrated defeat rather than in joyous victory. Our decisions are based on human wisdom rather than divine guidance. We are caught in the grip of seemingly unbreakable habits rather than enjoying the freedom that the Spirit of Christ brings.

Opening Discussion: Pastor Mark Finley, a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist, conducted a series of evangelistic meetings on the East Coast of America, in the state of Massachusetts. After one of the meetings, a young man in his late twenties approached Pastor Finley with a strange, concerned look on his face. He asked, “Can we talk privately? I have a very important question to ask you.”

Pastor Finley invited the young man to be seated in a quiet corner of the auditorium for their discussion. The young man launched immediately into his concerns. Anxiously, he blurted out the questions, “How do I know if I have committed the unpardonable sin? Why do I feel so spiritually empty? Is this emptiness a sign that the Holy Spirit has left me?” Pastor Finley patiently answered the questions one by one until this young man had new assurance in Christ and a sense of the daily presence of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Here is the fundamental question: What is the difference between the unpardonable sin and the baptism of the Holy Spirit? They are two polarities on opposite sides of the Holy Spirit spectrum. Additionally, what is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? How is one literally “filled” with

the Spirit? Why is the infilling of the Holy Spirit not simply an emotional experience? What kind of experience is it?

►STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: The major themes of today’s lesson are (1) the baptism of the Holy Spirit, (2) the prerequisites to receiving the Holy Spirit, and (3) the difference the infilling of the Holy Spirit makes in the life of each believer. Under the larger umbrella of these themes, this commentary section will attempt to explore answers to the following questions: What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? And what does John the Baptist mean when he points his hearers forward to Jesus, who would baptize them with “the Holy Spirit and fire” (*Matt. 3:11, NKJV*)? Notice the Bible says, “and fire” not “or fire.” What does that distinction mean?

As your students explore the answers to these questions, it is important that they bear in mind that there are at least three prime ways that help in understanding a Bible passage:

First, urge class members to read the context of the passage. What comes before the text they are considering, and what comes after?

Second, how are the words and concepts of this passage used in other places in the Bible?

And third, what is the meaning of the words in the passage they are studying? (At times, it is helpful to look at the original language of the text. A good Bible commentary or dictionary can be useful here.)

Throughout the lesson, be sure to emphasize to your students that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is for all believers. Share the truth that baptism is immersion and that each one of us can be immersed daily in the presence of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As we saturate our minds with the Word, we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that inspired the Bible fills and transforms our lives as we read it.

Bible Commentary

I. Baptism of the Holy Spirit (*Review Matthew 3:11 with the class.*)

Throughout the Bible, fire is used as a symbol of the presence of God. In Genesis 3:24, the presence of God guarding the tree of life is symbolized by a flaming sword. In Exodus, God’s presence is manifest in a burning bush (*Exod. 3:2–4*). It also is revealed in the pillar of fire that guides Israel by night (*Exod. 13:21*). God makes Himself manifest in the “consuming fire” on Mount Sinai (*Exod. 24:17*). He reveals Himself

in the Shekinah glory in the Most Holy Place in Israel's sanctuary (*Exod. 25:8, 21, 22; 40:34–38*). He is there in the fire that consumes the heathen altar on Mount Carmel, in the burning coal off heaven's altar that touches Isaiah's lips, and in the refining fire of Malachi (*1 Kings 18:38; Isa. 6:6–8; Mal. 3:2, 3; 4:1*).

As we can see throughout the Old Testament, God's presence is revealed in the imagery of flaming fire. It is, therefore, no accident that in Acts 2 the presence of the Holy Spirit is revealed in tongues of fire. Throughout the New Testament, fire is a unique biblical symbol that represents the glory, majesty, and power of God's eternal presence through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism in Scripture is neither sprinkling nor pouring. It is immersion. To be baptized in the Holy Spirit is to be immersed in the presence of God. It is to be filled with His grace and to radiate His glory. It is to reveal to a waiting world and a watching universe the greatness of His power in our lives. It is to live in harmony with His will, to be committed to His ways, and to be surrendered to His purpose. Empowered by the Spirit, our lives are changed, and we are witnesses of His grace. When we are immersed in a water baptism as a testimony of our total commitment to Christ and His truth, we are also baptized by the Holy Spirit and experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Consider This: Give examples from the Old and New Testaments of how fire is used to symbolize the presence of God.

■ *What does baptism mean? Define “immersion.” What does it mean to be baptized, or immersed, in the presence of God?*

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: The biblical conditions given in Scripture for the reception of the Holy Spirit are given not because God desires to hold back His Spirit from us but because He desires us to receive Him in His fullness. It is not that God is hesitant to give the Spirit; it is rather that we are incapable of receiving the Holy Spirit in His fullness without meeting the conditions.

Thought Questions:

① God longs to fill us with His Holy Spirit and radically transform our lives more than we can ever imagine. His desire is that we live lives of victory, reflecting His goodness and proclaiming His love and power. What does the baptism of the Holy Spirit mean to you personally?

- 2 How has the Holy Spirit made a difference in your life?
- 3 What are some practical principles in receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit each day?

Life Application Questions: Take each of the following conditions for the reception of the Holy Spirit individually, and discuss them with your class:

- 1 Why is repentance a prerequisite to receiving the Holy Spirit?
- 2 What role does trusting God's Word play in receiving the Holy Spirit?
- 3 How does obedience play a role in the reception of the Holy Spirit?
- 4 Why do you think God would not pour out His Holy Spirit on those who knowingly are disobedient to His will?
- 5 Why does impurity hinder the working of the Holy Spirit?

Activity: Ask members of your class to share Bible passages that are the most meaningful to them about the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: *The essence of all Christian faith is Christ-centered living. If our faith does not make a difference in our daily lives, it does not make much difference at all. For faith to be genuine and authentic, it must make a difference in every aspect of our lives. This transformation is one of the reasons for the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, our lives are changed and the people around us take notice.*

Activities:

- 1 What is the difference between the self-centered person and the Spirit-controlled person?

- 2 Read Galatians 5:16–26 meditatively, and ask God to reveal any area in your life that is not in complete harmony with His will. Spend a moment reflecting on what the Holy Spirit brings to your mind.

- 3 Surrender that area to Him and claim the promise of the Holy Spirit for victory.

HELP NEEDED



Hundreds of people in Dublin, Ireland, have responded favorably to the Adventist message, but one church building isn't large enough to accommodate them all.

The first Adventist church in Norway, founded in 1879, embraces a vibrant community of young and old, native and immigrant. Now it's time to expand.

The Adventist school in Marusevec, Croatia has been successfully operating for more than forty years, but the school needs to renovate its communist-era buildings.

Hope Channel Poland has

been broadcasting English-language content with Polish translation since 2012.

Professional programming in the local language, featuring health programs, Bible content, and more is needed. You can help by giving generously to this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. For stories, video, and more, visit our secure website.

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