

# DOES HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM SAVE MEN?

(by George Battey)

There are many things that could be said about the topic of Holy Spirit baptism, but this study will focus only on one aspect of the subject: *Was the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism to save men from their sins?*

## JOHN AND HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

Holy Spirit baptism was first mentioned by John the baptizer when he was immersing people in the Jordan River for the remission of their sins. Notice what the scriptures say about John's baptism:

*John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. (Mk 1:4-5)*

Water baptism is under consideration in the above passage. This baptism was to prepare people for the coming Messiah (read verses 2-3). Notice, water baptism was "for the remission of sins." If John's baptism in water was "for the remission of sins," then it was *essential* for salvation. No one could be saved without it. (Read Lk. 7:29-30 for more information about this point.) John continues by saying:

*I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mk 1:8)*

This verse, of course, comes after verses 4-5. This means people had the "remission of sins" by being baptized in water before baptism of the Holy Spirit was even promised. Baptism of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is not "for the remission of sins."

## JESUS AND HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

Jesus is the next person to talk about Holy Spirit baptism. Just before He ascended back into heaven, here is what He said to His apostles:

*And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5)*

The apostles were being promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but they were already saved. Therefore, baptism of the Holy Spirit is not for salvation. Holy Spirit baptism was certainly important, but it was not to save people from their sins. It had another purpose. We will discuss this purpose in a moment.

### PETER AND HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

Peter is the next person to speak about Holy Spirit baptism. On the day of Pentecost Peter himself experienced this baptism. What did he have to say about this?

*"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 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 2:36-38)*

If you will read these verses very, very carefully and accept what they say, you will see clearly that repentance and baptism in water were "for the remission of sins." The "gift of the Holy Spirit" would come after the remission of sins.

Some believe the "gift of the Holy Spirit" is the same thing as baptism of the Holy Spirit. If this is true, then baptism of the Holy Spirit is not for the remission of sins, because remission of sins comes before receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit – according to this passage.

The point is, baptism of the Holy Spirit is not for the purpose of saving people from their sins.

### PHILIP AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Turn now to Acts 8 where we read about a preacher named Philip. This preacher was inspired and could also work miracles according to Acts 8:6.

*But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. (Acts 8:12)*

This verse clearly states that the people listening to Philip believed and were baptized. When they did this, were they saved from their past sins, or were they still sinners? Jesus said in Mk 16:16, "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved.*" If we accept what Jesus said, we must conclude that these people in Acts 8:12 were actually saved from their sins, because they had done exactly what Jesus said they should do in Mk 16:16. Now, read two verses further into the story:

*Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 8:14-16)*

These people had been baptized, but they did not receive Holy Spirit baptism. This demonstrates that people are saved, not by Holy Spirit baptism, but by believing the gospel and being baptized in water for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38).

### SUMMARY

We have examined four passages of scripture which all agree – Holy Spirit baptism is not for the purpose of saving men from their sins. Because this is true, it would be possible for baptism of the Holy Spirit to pass away without anyone losing their salvation.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit was for the purpose of verifying the spoken and written words of the apostles and prophets (Mk 16:17-20; Heb 2:3-4). Because the apostles were revealing a new message from God (the gospel), they needed credentials to verify they were truly speaking on behalf of heaven. (Read Ex 4:1-9 when Moses faced the same problem in his day.) Baptism of the Holy Spirit provided the apostles and prophets with the ability to perform miracles. The miracles were proof they spoke on behalf of heaven. Miracles confirmed the word of God to be true. (Read Jn 3:1-2; 4:48; 5:36; 9:16; 10:37-38; 12:37; 15:24; 20:30-31; Acts 2:22; 10:38).

Once again, baptism of the Holy Spirit was not for salvation. It was for the purpose of confirming and verifying the truthfulness of the message spoken by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament era. Baptism of the Holy Spirit ended when the message of the apostles was completely revealed and confirmed. (1 Cor 13:8-13).

### GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

To be saved from past sins, God requires the following steps:

- 1) **Belief** in Christ as the only begotten Son of God (Jn 3:16).
- 2) **Repentance** of sins (“turning away from”) (Acts 17:30).
- 3) **Verbal Confession** of faith in Christ (Rom 10:10).
- 4) **Baptism** (immersion) into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

38 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 22:16 (NKJV)

16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and **be baptized**, and wash away **your sins**, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Romans 6:3-4 (NKJV)

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were **baptized into His death**?

4 Therefore we were **buried with Him through baptism into death**, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Baptism is the “*point in time*” that God applies the blood of Christ to the sinner’s life. The sinner is baptized into the death of Christ (Rom 6:3-4). Sinners were never told to “*pray the sinner’s prayer*” as is commonly believed today (see Jn 9:31). Only Christians have the privilege of praying for forgiveness of sins (1 Jn 1:9; 2:1 – notice these verses were written to Christians, not sinners). Those who have not been baptized correctly must be rebaptized (see Acts 19:1-5) in order to be saved (1 Pet 3:20-21).

While it *may* be true that the “thief on the cross” was never baptized (perhaps he may have been—see Mt 3:5), it must be remembered he was saved while the Old Testament law was still in force (Heb 9:16-17). This is exactly what the controversy over the Sabbath day revolves around—which law applies today and what does the Lord require of men today. The Lord’s requirement of baptism “*for the remission of sins*” came after His death and resurrection (Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16).

After baptism, we must continue in “*all things*” which the Lord “commanded” (Mt 28:20). We must be careful “*lest we fall*” (1 Cor 10:12). Even saved Christians can “*fall away*” (Gal 5:4), have their name removed from the “*book of life*” (Rev 22:19), and suffer a worse fate than “*death without mercy*” (Heb 10:26-29). Christians must “*make their calling and election sure*” by “*giving all diligence*” (2 Pet 1:5-11).