

Chapter 12 of Corinthians pivots around verses 12 and 13 in which Paul introduces the concept of the Body of Christ, both as an illustration and as a spiritual reality. These two verses also introduce a topic usually called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Though the subject of debate, confusion and division, a reasoned handling of the Biblical texts will lead to a correct, Biblical understanding.

I. The Nature of Spirit-baptism developed historically.

1. *Spirit-baptism in the prophecy of John* (Matthew 3:11-12; cf. Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16-17; John 1:33) Two truths are established immediately in this prophecy, one by direct statement and the other by analogy.
 - a. The One who is doing the baptizing is Jesus Christ Himself.
 - b. The element into which a person is baptized is the Holy Spirit. The preposition “in” or “with” is the same throughout these passages and in 1 Corinthians 12:13.
The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is **not** a baptism which the Holy Spirit performs but a baptism carried out by Jesus using the Holy Spirit. Hence we sometimes use the less confusing term, Spirit-baptism.
2. *Spirit-baptism in the prophecy of Jesus* (Acts 1:4-5)
 - a. Jesus confirms the analogy with the baptism in water by John.
 - b. Jesus identifies this with the gift the Father had promised.
 - c. Jesus points to the fulfilment as yet future, though near.
3. *Spirit-baptism initially fulfilled at Pentecost* (Acts 2)
The initial fulfillment of the prophecies of John and Jesus concerning Spirit-baptism occurred at Pentecost, although within Acts 2 it does not refer to that which happened as Spirit-baptism. It is called the gift of the Spirit (cf. Acts 1:4-5) and will be interpreted as Spirit-baptism in Acts 10-11.
4. *Spirit-baptism experienced in the household of Cornelius* (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17)
 - a. Peter identifies the experience of Cornelius with Spirit-baptism by referring to it as the promised gift and relating it to the prophecy of Jesus in Acts 1:4-5.
 - b. Peter furthermore establishes the time for the start of Spirit-baptism as Pentecost by referring to it in the past tense and pointing to the time “at the beginning.”
 - c. Spirit-baptism established the fact that the new Gentile believers were now a part of the church.
5. *Spirit-baptism in the Corinthian experience* (1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 12:12-13)
 - a. Paul addressed not only the Corinthian believers in this letter, but all believers (1:1-2).
 - b. This particular universal aspect of Spirit-baptism is repeated in 12:12-13 where Paul writes inclusively using the first person plural, “we.” All who place their faith in Jesus Christ are baptized with one Spirit into one body.
 - c. The nature of Spirit-baptism is explained with the term “baptism” and with the parallel thought, “we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” The believer is placed into the Spirit (baptism) and the Spirit is placed into the believer (given to drink).
 - d. That which was implied in Acts 10-11 is now made explicit. This work of Christ with the Spirit brings believers into a special relationship to one another and to Christ Himself. Spirit-baptism makes the church the Body of Christ.

Spirit-baptism is correctly defined as that act of Jesus Christ by which He joins all believers since Pentecost into one body by immersing them into His Spirit and putting His Spirit into them.

II. The significance of Spirit-baptism

1. Spirit-baptism ties spiritual gifts with being a member of a body.
 - a. The familiarity of the figure should not hide its significance. We are members of a body like members of a physical body.
 - b. Each member has a special function in the body whether the physical or the spiritual Body of Christ.
2. Spirit-baptism raises our corporate responsibility (Ephesians 4:11-16).
 - a. The church cannot become that which it should be without each member doing its part.
 - b. The individual cannot become that which he or she should become without the input of the body.
3. Spirit-baptism distinguishes in a very significant way the NT believer and the church from the OT saint and Israel. Pentecost separates the Church from Israel. The church is not just a voluntary association of people who believe the same, nor even just an extended family. The church is the body of Christ and we are each members of it.

Spirit-baptism is the experienced of everyone who has called upon the name of the Lord to be saved. It began at Pentecost and will continue until Jesus Christ calls the church to Himself. Spirit-baptism is what makes the Church the Body of Christ. There is nothing needed to prove that you have been baptized with the Spirit. It is sufficient to accept the Word of God, that every child of God has received Spirit-baptism. With this experience comes responsibility and with this knowledge comes accountability. We belong to one another like members of a physical body belong to each other.