

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

PNEUMATOLOGY

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

UNIT 6: THE INDWELLING, SEALING, AND BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

Lesson 17

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

A One-Time, Conversion-Moment Reality

If You Are in Christ, You Have Been Baptized in the Spirit

Key Texts: 1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:1–4; 8:14–17; 10:44–48; 19:1–7; Ephesians 4:4–5

“For by One Spirit We Were All Baptized into One Body”

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Series Verse

*“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes,
He will guide you into all the truth;
for He will not speak on His own initiative,
but whatever He hears, He will speak;
and He will disclose to you what is to come.”*

John 16:13, NASB 1995

Introduction

With Lesson 17 we arrive at one of the most contested pneumatological doctrines in contemporary evangelical Christianity: the baptism of the Holy Spirit. No pneumatological question has generated more confusion, more division, more spiritual anxiety, and more misdirected seeking among sincere believers than this one. The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements — which together now represent the largest and fastest-growing segment of world Christianity — have built their entire distinctive spiritual culture on a particular understanding of Spirit baptism: that it is a second-stage blessing subsequent to conversion, evidenced by speaking in tongues, available to and necessary for those who wish to live in the fullness of the Spirit's power. Hundreds of millions of Christians have either sought this experience or been spiritually troubled by their failure to obtain it. No pneumatological doctrine of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been more practically consequential.

The Reformed, cessationist position — which this series has consistently maintained and which the weight of New Testament exegesis supports — is that the Pentecostal and Charismatic doctrine of Spirit baptism as a second-stage experience is both exegetically unwarranted and pastorally harmful. Unwarranted, because the New Testament's clearest statement of Spirit baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13) explicitly teaches that every believer has been Spirit-baptized at conversion, not that some have been and others have not. Pastorally harmful, because the two-tier pneumatological system it creates — dividing the Christian community into the Spirit-baptized and the not-yet-Spirit-baptized — produces either spiritual pride in those who claim the experience or spiritual anxiety, inadequacy, and fruitless seeking in those who have not. Both outcomes dishonor the Spirit and distort the gospel.

The alternative that this lesson proposes is not a reduced or impoverished pneumatology that explains away the Spirit's power. It is the pneumatology of 1 Corinthians 12:13: every genuine believer is Spirit-baptized, incorporated into the body of Christ, and fully equipped with the Spirit's presence and resources from the moment of conversion. There is no second blessing to seek, no spiritual elite to envy, no experience to tarry for. What there is — and what this lesson will emphasize alongside the doctrinal correction — is the comprehensive, life-transforming reality of the Spirit's presence in every believer and the ongoing call to be filled (Ephesians 5:18), to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), and to yield to the Spirit's direction in every dimension of the Christian life. The doctrine of Spirit baptism, rightly understood, is the platform of spiritual fullness, not the obstacle that keeps some believers from it.

This lesson will define Spirit baptism exegetically, examine the primary New Testament text (1 Corinthians 12:13), analyze the four transitional Acts narratives that the Pentecostal tradition treats as models for second-blessing experience, distinguish Spirit baptism from Spirit filling, address the Pentecostal subsequence doctrine and its exegetical problems, and close with the pastoral clarity that every genuine believer needs: you are in Christ; you have been baptized in the Spirit; you are not a second-class Christian waiting for a second experience. You have everything in Christ.

I. Spirit Baptism Defined

The One-Time, Conversion-Moment Incorporation into the Body of Christ

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the sovereign act by which the Holy Spirit incorporates the believing sinner into the body of Christ at the moment of conversion, uniting him to Christ and to the community of all other believers. It is the pneumatological event by which the individually redeemed sinner becomes a member of the corporate body — placed in Christ and simultaneously placed among all who are in Christ, made one with the Head and with every member of the body simultaneously. Spirit baptism is neither a water rite nor a second spiritual experience; it is the Spirit's decisive, once-for-all, conversion-moment act of corporate incorporation.

The Greek vocabulary for Spirit baptism — baptizein en pneumati (to baptize in/with the Spirit) — is used consistently in all four Gospels and Acts in the promise form attributed to John the Baptist and to Jesus: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5). The promise looks forward to Pentecost as the initiating event of the Spirit-baptism age — but Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 12:13 makes clear that the Spirit baptism that Pentecost inaugurated continues to apply to every subsequent believer at the moment of their conversion: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”

Three definitional characteristics of Spirit baptism emerge from the New Testament's usage. First, it is once-for-all: Spirit baptism, like water baptism, is not repeated. The Corinthian Christians had all been baptized in the Spirit — this is Paul's past-tense assertion, not an aspiration for some to attain. Second, it is universal among believers: “we were all baptized” — not “some of us” or “the more spiritually advanced among us” but all. Third, its result is incorporation: baptism is into one body — the corporate reality of the church as the body of Christ is the pneumatological product of the Spirit's baptizing work. Spirit baptism is not primarily about individual spiritual empowerment; it is about corporate incorporation. The Spirit does not merely empower the individual believer; He places the individual believer within the body.

II. 1 Corinthians 12:13 — The Definitive Statement

All Believers, One Baptism, One Body

A. The Text and Its Exegetical Significance

The single most important New Testament text for the doctrine of Spirit baptism is 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (NASB 1995). The verse is the pneumatological foundation of Paul's entire argument about spiritual gifts and the unity of the body in 1 Corinthians 12–14. He is addressing the Corinthian problem of gift-pride — the tendency of those with spectacular gifts (particularly tongues) to treat themselves as pneumatologically superior to other members of the community. His response is to ground the

community's unity in the single Spirit-baptism that all members have received: you are all one body because you were all Spirit-baptized into one body.

The exegetical details of the verse are decisive. First, the subject is “we were all” — not some, not the spiritually elite, not those who have had a specific subsequent experience. All. The universality is as explicit as it could be, and it is the pneumatological ground of Paul's community-unity argument: there is one body, one Spirit, and one baptism (cf. Ephesians 4:4–5) because all members have received the same Spirit-baptism. A two-tier community — some Spirit-baptized and some not — would undermine Paul's entire argument. Second, the tense is aorist (“were baptized” — ebaptisthēmen): the baptism is a completed past event, not an ongoing process or a hoped-for future experience. Third, the direction is “into one body”: the Spirit's baptism incorporates all believers into the single corporate body of Christ.

Fourth — and this is the exegetical point that most directly refutes the Pentecostal initial evidence doctrine — the gift of tongues is explicitly excluded from the category of universal Spirit-baptism. In verse 11, the Spirit distributes gifts “just as He wills,” which Paul then illustrates (v. 30) with a series of rhetorical questions that expect negative answers: “All do not speak with tongues, do they?” The Greek construction demands “No, not all.” If all believers have been Spirit-baptized (v. 13) but not all speak in tongues (v. 30), then tongues is not the evidence of Spirit baptism. Tongues is one gift distributed by the Spirit to some; Spirit baptism is the universal reality experienced by all. The two are not equivalent.

B. Ephesians 4:4–5 — One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism

Ephesians 4:4–5 provides the creedal confirmation of 1 Corinthians 12:13's universal Spirit-baptism claim: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (NASB 1995). The unity of the church is grounded in a series of sevenfold “one” statements, each identifying a single, unifying reality that all believers share. Among these: one baptism. Not two baptisms — a water baptism for all and a Spirit baptism for some. One baptism — the single, universal, Spirit-administered rite of initiation into the body of Christ that every believer has received.

The “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5 has been interpreted variously: some take it as referring to water baptism (which is one, even though some have been rebaptized), and others take it as referring to Spirit baptism (the single universal Spirit-baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13). The most satisfying exegetical resolution is that the two are closely related: the one baptism is the single baptismal event that encompasses both the water rite of public initiation into the Christian community and the Spirit's inner work of incorporation into the body of Christ. They are not identical — water baptism and Spirit baptism are distinguishable — but they point to the same single event of conversion and initiation into Christ and His body.

*“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” | “All do not speak with tongues, do they?” |
“One Lord, one faith, one baptism”*

1 Corinthians 12:13, 30; Ephesians 4:5, NASB 1995

III. The Transitional Acts Narratives

What Pentecost, Samaria, Caesarea, and Ephesus Actually Are

The Pentecostal and Charismatic reading of Spirit baptism draws heavily on four narratives in the book of Acts in which the Spirit's coming appears to be distinct from and subsequent to initial conversion or faith: Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4), the Samaritans (Acts 8:14–17), Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44–48), and the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:1–7). The Pentecostal argument is that these narratives establish a normative pattern: believers first believe or undergo initial conversion and then, later, receive the Spirit in a distinct second experience — and this pattern is available to and expected of all believers who seek the fullness of the Spirit's power.

The cessationist response, consistent with the broader hermeneutical framework of this series, is that this reading fundamentally misunderstands the genre and purpose of the Acts narratives. Acts is not a prescriptive manual of Christian experience but a descriptive history of a specific, unrepeatable period of redemptive history — the period of the Spirit's progressive extension of the New Covenant's pneumatological blessings to previously excluded groups. Each of the four Acts narratives represents the Spirit's arrival at a new frontier of the expanding mission — and each is unique, unrepeatable, and interpretable only within the specific redemptive-historical context that it occupies.

A. Acts 2:1–4 — Pentecost: The Inauguration

The Pentecost narrative was examined in depth in Lesson 10 and established as a unique, once-for-all, redemptive-historical event — the inauguration of the New Covenant age of the Spirit, the constitution of the church as the Spirit-indwelt temple, and the empowerment of the mission that Acts 1:8 commissioned. The disciples who received the Spirit at Pentecost were not receiving a second-stage blessing subsequent to their conversion; they were living through the unrepeatable transition from the Old Covenant's pneumatological arrangement to the New Covenant's. They waited because they were waiting for Pentecost, not for a second experience. No subsequent believer needs to wait for Pentecost, because Pentecost has happened. The Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost has not been withdrawn; He is the permanent, universal, New Covenant reality that Lesson 15 established as the Spirit's indwelling of every believer.

B. Acts 8:14–17 — Samaria: The Extension to a Previously Excluded Group

The Samaritan narrative is the most frequently cited Acts text in support of the subsequence doctrine, because it appears to present believers who have been baptized in water (v. 12) receiving the Spirit later, through the laying on of apostolic hands (vv. 15–17). Several features of this narrative resist the Pentecostal reading and support the redemptive-historical interpretation. First, the context: the Samaritans were a mixed, semi-Jewish people whose relationship to Judaism and to the covenant community was deeply ambiguous. They were neither full Jews nor full Gentiles. Their reception of the Spirit was delayed until the Jerusalem apostles came specifically to confirm and authenticate the extension of the New Covenant's blessings to this previously excluded group. The delay was not a model for second-stage

experiences; it was the pneumatological authentication of a unique redemptive-historical transition.

Second, the apostolic role: the Spirit came through the laying on of apostolic hands (v. 17) — a context that is irrepeatable because the apostolic office is unrepeatable. No subsequent minister has apostolic authority; therefore, no subsequent situation can replicate the Samaritan Spirit-reception that depended on apostolic presence and authority. Third, the theological point: if the Samaritan pattern were normative for all believers, every conversion would require subsequent apostolic authentication for Spirit-reception — a conclusion no Pentecostal would accept. The Samaritan narrative is not a pattern but a unique redemptive-historical event in which the Spirit's extension to a new, previously ambiguous group was publicly confirmed by apostolic presence.

C. Acts 10:44–48 — Cornelius: The Extension to the Gentiles

The Cornelius narrative is the clearest of the four Acts passages in demonstrating its own unique redemptive-historical character. The Spirit falls on Cornelius and his household while Peter is still speaking — before water baptism, before any apostolic laying on of hands, in a pattern that is precisely the reverse of the Samaritan narrative. The irreducibility of the Cornelius pattern to any single model — it fits neither the Pentecostal pattern (Spirit after conversion + prayer + laying on of hands) nor any other proposed normative pattern — is itself evidence that Acts is not providing normative patterns but narrating unique, Spirit-sovereign, redemptive-historical events.

The theological significance of Cornelius' Spirit-reception is specifically about the extension of the New Covenant's pneumatological blessings to the Gentiles. Peter recognizes its significance immediately: "The Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15) — the Gentile Pentecost, the Spirit's arrival at the most radical frontier of the expanding mission. The Jerusalem church's response (Acts 11:18) is not "Well, then we must all seek a Cornelius-like experience"; it is "God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life." The Cornelius narrative is about the Gentiles' inclusion in the covenant, not about a second-stage pneumatological experience available to all believers.

D. Acts 19:1–7 — Ephesus: The Extension to Old Covenant Disciples of John

The Ephesian disciples present the most complex of the four transitional narratives. When Paul arrives in Ephesus and asks the disciples whether they received the Holy Spirit when they believed, they respond: "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" (v. 2). Further inquiry reveals that they have been baptized only with John's baptism (v. 3). These are not Christian believers in the New Covenant sense; they are Old Covenant disciples of John the Baptist who have not yet received the gospel of Jesus' death, resurrection, and exaltation — and whose baptism, therefore, is the pre-Pentecost preparatory baptism of John rather than the post-Pentecost baptism of the new covenant.

Paul preaches Christ to them (v. 4), they believe, are baptized in Jesus' name (v. 5), and then receive the Spirit through Paul's laying on of hands (v. 6). This is not a second-blessing sequence in which already-converted believers seek and receive the Spirit; it is the conversion of pre-

Christian disciples who move from the Old Covenant's preparatory pneumatological condition into the New Covenant's fullness. Their "baptism" with the Spirit is part of their conversion, not subsequent to it; the apparent delay is the time required for Paul to preach the full gospel to them and for them to believe it. Once again, the narrative is a unique, redemptive-historical event marking the Spirit's extension to a specific, previously excluded group — not a pattern for second-stage experiences.

IV. The Pentecostal Subsequence Doctrine: Evaluation and Refutation

The Exegetical and Theological Case Against a Second-Stage Spirit Baptism

A. The Subsequence Doctrine Stated

The classical Pentecostal subsequence doctrine holds that Spirit baptism is a second definite work of grace, distinct from and subsequent to conversion, normally evidenced by speaking in tongues. The Pentecostal reading of the Acts narratives treats the disciples at Pentecost as the pattern: they were converted (during Jesus' ministry), and then received the Spirit baptism at Pentecost as a second, distinct experience. By extension, every believer is first converted and may then receive Spirit baptism in a second definite experience. The believer who has not yet received Spirit baptism is a believer, but a believer lacking the fullness of the Spirit's power.

The contemporary Charismatic movement has modified the classical Pentecostal position in various ways, not always insisting on the tongue-speaking evidence or the specific Pentecostal theology of sanctification that underlies the classical formulation. But the basic structure remains: there is a distinction between ordinary Christian experience (conversion, indwelling, justification) and a Spirit-baptism experience that provides a distinct and higher level of pneumatological fullness and power.

B. The Exegetical Refutation

The exegetical case against the subsequence doctrine rests primarily on 1 Corinthians 12:13, which has been examined in Section II. Four specific exegetical arguments refute the Pentecostal reading. First, the universality argument: "we were all baptized." If Spirit baptism were a second-stage experience that some have received and others have not, Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12:12–13 collapses: his unity-of-the-body argument depends on all members having received the same Spirit-baptism. A community in which some are Spirit-baptized and others are not is a community divided by the most fundamental pneumatological distinction possible — the opposite of the unity Paul is arguing for.

Second, the non-tongues argument: 1 Corinthians 12:30's rhetorical question ("All do not speak with tongues, do they?" — expecting "No") directly contradicts the initial evidence doctrine. If all believers have been Spirit-baptized (v. 13) and not all speak in tongues (v. 30), then tongues is not the evidence of Spirit-baptism. The same Spirit distributes both the universal incorporation of Spirit-baptism and the selective gift of tongues — they are distinct phenomena.

Third, the Acts interpretation argument: the Pentecostal use of the Acts narratives as normative models for second-stage experience confuses descriptive and prescriptive narrative. Acts narrates what happened; it does not prescribe what must happen in every believer's experience. Furthermore, the four transitional narratives each have unique redemptive-historical contexts (Pentecost, Samaritans, Gentiles, Old Covenant disciples) that make them non-repeatable transitions, not models. The hermeneutical principle that governs the reading of Acts in this series — established in Lesson 10 — is that Acts is redemptive-historical narrative, not prescriptive biography.

Fourth, the disciples-at-Pentecost argument: the Pentecostal use of the disciples as the pattern for subsequent believers' second-blessing experience misunderstands the disciples' unique redemptive-historical position. They lived through the transition from the Old Covenant's pneumatological arrangement to the New Covenant's — they were present at the most epochal pneumatological event in salvation history. No subsequent believer is in that position; every believer since Pentecost has been born into the age that Pentecost inaugurated and has received at conversion the Spirit that Pentecost poured out. To model subsequent believers' Spirit-reception on the disciples' unique Pentecostal experience is like modeling believers' relationship to the resurrection on the disciples' unique experience of Easter morning — it confuses the unique with the normative.

V. Spirit Baptism Distinguished from Spirit Filling

Once for All vs. Ongoing and Commanded

The critical pastoral distinction at the heart of the Spirit baptism debate is the distinction between Spirit baptism (once-for-all, universal, at conversion) and Spirit filling (ongoing, commanded, conditional on yieldedness). Lesson 15 introduced this distinction in the context of the indwelling; here it becomes the key to navigating the legitimate pneumatological concern behind the Charismatic tradition's emphasis on Spirit baptism.

The Charismatic tradition's insistence that there is more pneumatological power and presence available to believers than most of them experience is not wrong in its concern, only wrong in its diagnosis. The problem is not that some believers have been Spirit-baptized and others have not; the problem is that virtually all believers are Spirit-baptized but many are not consistently Spirit-filled. The gap between the pneumatological fullness that is available to every believer and the pneumatological reality that most believers actually inhabit is not a gap between the Spirit-baptized and the not-yet-Spirit-baptized; it is the gap between permanent indwelling (which all possess) and consistent filling (which many do not cultivate).

Ephesians 5:18's command — “be being filled with the Spirit” — is addressed to believers who are already Spirit-baptized and already Spirit-indwelt. It calls them not to receive the Spirit for the first time or in some new and higher sense but to live in the ongoing, continuous, yielded, responsive mode of Spirit-dependence that allows the Spirit who already dwells within to exercise His full, controlling, empowering presence over the whole of the believer's life. This is the genuine pneumatological fullness that the Charismatic tradition is rightly seeking and

wrongly locating: it is not a second blessing but the ongoing realization of the first and only blessing of the Spirit's indwelling.

The practical implication is significant. The believer who has been told he needs Spirit baptism will seek an experience — often pursuing emotional intensity, speaking in tongues, or some other spectacular sign as evidence that the experience has been received. The believer who understands the Spirit-baptism/Spirit-filling distinction will instead pursue the ongoing, quiet, discipline-shaped, Word-saturated, community-supported, sin-mortifying, obedience-oriented life of Spirit-yieldedness that Ephesians 5:18–21 describes as the filling's context and content. One pursuit leads to episodic religious experiences of uncertain origin and unreliable permanence; the other leads to the steady, growing, fruitful, Christ-conforming life of the Spirit-filled disciple.

VI. The Pastoral Clarity: You Have Everything in Christ

No Second-Class Christians, No Second Experience to Seek

The pastoral heart of this lesson's doctrine can be stated in a single sentence: if you are in Christ, you have been baptized in the Spirit. There is no second-class Christian status in the New Testament for believers who have not had a Spirit-baptism experience subsequent to conversion. There is no spiritual elite of the truly Spirit-empowered who have moved beyond the ordinary Christian life into a higher pneumatological plane. There is no experience to tarry for, no tongues to seek, no emotional threshold to cross, no rite or ritual or spiritual discipline that will unlock the Spirit-baptism that has not yet been received. If you have repented of your sins, believed in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior, and have received the indwelling Spirit as the evidence of your regeneration — you have been Spirit-baptized. You are as fully Spirit-baptized as any tongue-speaking Pentecostal who ever lived.

The assurance this pastoral clarity provides is of a particularly specific kind: it dismantles the pneumatological anxiety that the two-tier system creates. The believer who has been told "you need Spirit baptism" lives with the persistent sense of pneumatological insufficiency — of having something less than what the fully empowered Christian life requires, of being on the wrong side of the threshold that separates the ordinary from the extraordinary. This anxiety is not the Spirit's conviction but a human imposition — a theological system's judgment on what the Spirit has not judged. The New Testament's judgment is that every believer in Christ is fully, equally, permanently Spirit-baptized; the two-tier anxiety is not a pneumatological reality but a pneumatological fiction imposed on sincere and often suffering believers.

This does not mean that the Christian who understands Spirit baptism correctly has no room for pneumatological growth or for the deepening of the Spirit's ministry in his life. It means that the growth and deepening he pursues are the growth and deepening of the Spirit's filling — not the pursuit of a Spirit-baptism he does not yet have. The Spirit-baptized believer who consistently grieves the Spirit, who neglects the Word, who lives in unconfessed sin, and who resists the Spirit's direction will experience a pneumatological impoverishment that is real and consequential. But the remedy is not seeking a second-stage baptism; it is repentance, renewed yieldedness, and the ongoing cultivation of the Spirit-filled life that Ephesians 5:18 commands.

The Spirit who was given at conversion is inexhaustible in His resources; the issue is never the Spirit's insufficiency but the believer's resistance.

VII. The Positive Vision: Living as One Who Has Been Spirit-Baptized

The Corporate and Missional Dimensions of Incorporation into the Body

The doctrine of Spirit baptism, rightly understood, is not merely a corrective to the Pentecostal tradition's errors. It is a positive, community-shaping, mission-energizing doctrine that deserves to be embraced in its own right rather than merely defended against misuse. When Paul invokes Spirit baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13, his purpose is not to deny that some believers have had dramatic spiritual experiences; it is to establish the pneumatological ground of the community's unity. Everyone in the Corinthian congregation — the tongue-speakers, the non-tongue-speakers, the miracle-workers, and the administrators — has been Spirit-baptized into the same one body. This shared Spirit-baptism is the pneumatological reality that makes their diverse gifts a contribution to a single community rather than competing claims to spiritual superiority.

The corporate dimension of Spirit baptism — “into one body” — is often neglected in discussions that focus entirely on the individual believer's experience. Spirit baptism is not primarily about me and my spiritual experience; it is about us and our common incorporation into the body of Christ. Every other believer in the world has been Spirit-baptized into the same body. The Chinese house church member who has never spoken in tongues, the Nigerian pentecostal who has, the Reformed cessationist theologian who rejects the gift, and the Charismatic worship leader who prizes it — all, if they are genuine believers, have been Spirit-baptized into the same one body by the same one Spirit. This is the pneumatological basis of the church's unity across all its cultural, theological, and denominational diversity: one Spirit, one baptism, one body.

The missional dimension of Spirit baptism is equally significant. Acts 1:8's commissioning of the Spirit-empowered witness — “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses” — is addressed to the pre-Pentecost disciples who are about to be Spirit-baptized for the first time. But its promise extends to every Spirit-baptized believer since Pentecost, because the same Spirit who came upon the disciples at Pentecost indwells every subsequent believer. The Spirit-baptized community is the Spirit-empowered mission community — incorporated into Christ's body and therefore participating in Christ's mission, empowered by the Spirit who was poured out specifically for the purpose of witness (Acts 1:8) and who continues to empower that witness in every Spirit-baptized believer who yields to His direction.

*“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,
whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free,
and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”*

1 Corinthians 12:13, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Spirit Baptism	The once-for-all, conversion-moment, sovereign act by which the Holy Spirit incorporates the believing sinner into the body of Christ, uniting him to Christ and to all other believers. Definitively described in 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” Spirit baptism is universal among believers (all believers have been Spirit-baptized), once-for-all (not repeated), and corporate in its primary orientation (it is incorporation into the body of Christ, not primarily an individual empowerment experience). Distinguished from Spirit filling (which is ongoing, conditional, and commanded) and from the sign gifts (which are distributed selectively by the Spirit to some believers, not to all).
Subsequence Doctrine	The classical Pentecostal teaching that Spirit baptism is a second definite work of grace, distinct from and subsequent to conversion, normally evidenced by speaking in tongues. Based on the Pentecostal reading of the Acts narratives (particularly the disciples’ experience at Pentecost) as a normative pattern for all believers: first conversion, then Spirit baptism as a distinct second experience. Refuted by 1 Corinthians 12:13 (“we were all baptized”), by 1 Corinthians 12:30 (tongues is not universal, contradicting the initial evidence doctrine), by the unique redemptive-historical character of the Acts transitional narratives, and by the category confusion of treating the disciples’ unique Pentecostal experience as the model for all subsequent believers.
Initial Evidence Doctrine	The Pentecostal teaching that speaking in tongues (glossolalia) is the necessary and normative initial evidence that Spirit baptism has been received. Directly contradicted by 1 Corinthians 12:30 (“All do not speak with tongues, do they?” — expecting the answer No): if Spirit baptism is universal among believers (1 Corinthians 12:13) but tongues is not universal (12:30), then tongues cannot be the evidence of Spirit baptism. Also challenged by the distinction between the xenolalia of Pentecost (intelligible foreign languages, Acts 2:4–6) and the glossolalia of Corinth (requiring interpretation, 1 Corinthians 14) — the Acts 2 phenomenon and the Corinthian gift are not identical.
Transitional Narratives	The four Acts Spirit-reception narratives (Pentecost, Acts 2:1–4; Samaria, Acts 8:14–17; Cornelius, Acts 10:44–48; Ephesus, Acts 19:1–7) that the Pentecostal tradition treats as normative models for second-stage Spirit-baptism experiences. The cessationist reading identifies them as unique, unrepeatable, redemptive-historical transitions: each marks the Spirit’s extension of the New Covenant’s pneumatological blessings to a previously excluded group (the original disciples at Pentecost, the Samaritans, the Gentiles, and Old Covenant disciples of John). Their unique contexts — each

Term	Definition
	serving a specific, non-repeatable redemptive-historical purpose — disqualify them as normative patterns for individual second-blessing experiences.
Baptizein En Pneumati	Greek: to baptize in/with the Spirit. The verbal phrase used in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts for John the Baptist's and Jesus' promise of Spirit baptism: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5). The promise looks forward to Pentecost as the initiating Spirit-baptism event and beyond to the ongoing incorporation of every subsequent believer into Christ's body through the Spirit's baptizing work. Paul's 1 Corinthians 12:13 (by one Spirit we were all baptized) is the fulfillment-statement that makes clear Spirit baptism is universal among believers rather than reserved for a second-stage experience.
One Body	The pneumatological product of Spirit baptism, according to 1 Corinthians 12:13 ("baptized into one body"). The Spirit's baptizing work is fundamentally corporate in its orientation: it does not merely empower the individual believer but incorporates that individual into the single, universal body of Christ that spans every cultural, ethnic, social, and denominational distinction. The "one body" is the pneumatological ground of the church's unity: all Spirit-baptized believers, regardless of their diversity of gifts, experiences, or theological traditions, have been incorporated by the same Spirit into the same one body. This is Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12–14: diversity of gifts does not divide the community because all members share the single Spirit-baptism that incorporates them into one body.
Pneumatological Two-Tier System	The implicit or explicit division of the Christian community into two spiritual classes: those who have received Spirit baptism (with accompanying signs or empowerment) and those who have not yet done so. The Pentecostal subsequence doctrine creates this two-tier system, which the New Testament explicitly contradicts: 1 Corinthians 12:13's "we were all baptized" dismantles any distinction between Spirit-baptized and not-yet-Spirit-baptized believers. The two-tier system produces either spiritual pride in those who claim the superior experience or pneumatological anxiety and a sense of insufficiency in those who have not, both of which are spiritually destructive and both of which are refuted by the New Testament's consistent claim that every believer is fully and equally Spirit-baptized.
Redemptive-Historical Hermeneutic	The interpretive framework that reads biblical narrative within the specific redemptive-historical context it occupies, distinguishing between unique, once-for-all events in salvation history and normative patterns intended for all believers in all times. Essential for the correct interpretation of Acts: the redemptive-historical hermeneutic reads the transitional Spirit-reception narratives (Pentecost, Samaria, Cornelius, Ephesus) as describing unique, unrepeatable extensions of the New Covenant's pneumatological blessings to new groups at specific moments in the Spirit's mission expansion, rather

Term	Definition
	than as prescriptive models for second-stage Spirit-baptism experiences in every believer's life.
Corporate Incorporation	The primary meaning and purpose of Spirit baptism according to 1 Corinthians 12:13: baptism "into one body." Spirit baptism is not primarily about individual spiritual empowerment (though the Spirit's indwelling that accompanies incorporation certainly empowers) but about the communal act of being placed in Christ's body — united to the Head and to every other member simultaneously. The corporate dimension is often neglected in discussions that focus exclusively on the individual believer's pneumatological experience, but it is Paul's primary pneumatological argument in 1 Corinthians 12: the body's unity flows from the Spirit-baptism that all members have received, making the diversity of gifts a contribution to a community rather than a competition.
You Have Everything in Christ	The pastoral summary of the Spirit-baptism doctrine: every genuine believer has been Spirit-baptized and therefore possesses, through union with Christ and the Spirit's indwelling, every pneumatological resource needed for the Christian life. There is no second-class Christian status for believers who have not had a Spirit-baptism experience subsequent to conversion; there is no higher pneumatological plane accessible only to those who have spoken in tongues. Colossians 2:10: "in Him you have been made complete." The pneumatological fullness the Charismatic tradition correctly values is available to every Spirit-baptized believer not through a second experience but through the ongoing, yielded, Spirit-filled life that Ephesians 5:18 commands.

Practical Application

A. For the Mind: *What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that Spirit baptism is a once-for-all, conversion-moment reality that every genuine believer has already received, not a second-stage experience that some believers have and others must seek. This conviction must be held with sufficient clarity and sufficient charity to function in two directions simultaneously. In the direction of the Charismatic tradition: the doctrine does not deny the reality of powerful, transformative spiritual experiences, the importance of the Spirit's ongoing empowerment, or the genuine desire for more of the Spirit's work. What it denies is the specific exegetical and theological framework that separates Spirit baptism from conversion and makes tongues its evidence. The desire for more of the Spirit is good; the theological framework that channels that desire is mistaken.

In the direction of the cessationist tradition that may have become complacent: the doctrine does not permit a passive satisfaction with the status quo of a pneumatologically tepid Christian life. Every Spirit-baptized believer is called to be Spirit-filled — continuously, persistently, obediently. The correctness of the cessationist doctrine of Spirit baptism does not justify the spiritual impoverishment that characterizes much cessationist Christian experience. The remedy is the ongoing, discipline-shaped, Word-anchored, community-embedded, sin-mortifying cultivation of the Spirit-filled life — not the seeking of a second-stage Spirit-baptism, but also not the smug satisfaction of one who has the right doctrine without the Spirit's life.

B. For the Heart: *What Must We Feel and Desire?*

If you have come to this lesson carrying the pneumatological anxiety of someone who has been told he needs Spirit baptism and has not received it — the anxiety of one who suspects he is on the wrong side of the spiritual threshold that separates the ordinary from the extraordinary — let the doctrine set you free. Not free from the pursuit of the Spirit's fullness in your life; free from the anxiety that you are spiritually insufficient because you have not had a specific experience. You are not insufficient. You are in Christ. You have been Spirit-baptized. You have been sealed. You have been indwelt. The Spirit who raised Christ from the dead dwells within you. The pneumatological resources you need for faithful, fruitful, Spirit-empowered Christian life are already yours. What remains is not to seek what you do not have but to yield to what you already possess.

Desire — passionately, persistently, specifically — the Spirit-filled life that Ephesians 5:18 commands: the life characterized by worship, gratitude, mutual submission, and the ongoing, conscious yieldedness to the Spirit's direction. Desire the progressive mortification of sin that grieves the Spirit who has sealed you. Desire the Word-saturated, prayer-saturated, community-embedded, mission-oriented life in which the Spirit who has baptized you into the body expresses His power through the body's corporate witness to the world. This is the genuine pneumatological fullness. This is what the Charismatic tradition is rightly seeking and

wrongly locating. Find it here: in the daily, disciplined, joyful, obedient, Spirit-yielded inhabitation of the fullness that is already yours in Christ.

C. For the Hands: *What Must We Do?*

- Read 1 Corinthians 12:1–31 as a sustained argument about the Spirit, gifts, and the body. Note Paul’s pneumatological strategy: he grounds the community’s unity (which is being disrupted by gift-pride) in the single Spirit-baptism that all members have received (v. 13), and then argues from that unity to the propriety of diverse gifts contributing to a single community rather than competing for spiritual status. How does understanding Spirit baptism as corporate incorporation — “into one body” — transform the way you think about your spiritual gifts? Are you using your gifts as contributions to the body’s mission, or as markers of your individual spiritual achievement?
- Study the four transitional Acts narratives in their full context: Acts 2:1–41 (Pentecost), Acts 8:4–25 (Samaria), Acts 10:34–11:18 (Cornelius), and Acts 19:1–10 (Ephesus). For each narrative, identify: (1) Who are the people receiving the Spirit? (2) What is their prior relationship to the covenant community? (3) What is the unique redemptive-historical significance of their Spirit-reception? (4) Why is this transition unrepeatable? The exercise should demonstrate that each narrative is uniquely situated in the Spirit’s progressive mission expansion and is not a normative pattern for individual second-blessing experiences.
- Memorize 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 4:4–5 together, as the two primary New Testament Spirit-baptism texts. Meditate on the universality of 12:13 (“we were all baptized”) and the singularity of Ephesians 4:5 (“one Lord, one faith, one baptism”). Let the memorization anchor the doctrine: every genuine believer has been Spirit-baptized into one body; there is one baptism, not two. How does the memorized verse function when you encounter the claim that you need Spirit baptism as a second experience?
- If you know believers in your life who are experiencing the pneumatological anxiety of seeking Spirit baptism (or who have been told they need it), prepare to have a pastoral conversation with them using the doctrine of this lesson. How would you present the exegetical case of 1 Corinthians 12:13 with clarity and charity? How would you distinguish the legitimate desire for the Spirit’s fullness (which the filling addresses) from the misplaced seeking for Spirit baptism as a second-stage experience? And how would you affirm what is right in the Charismatic tradition’s pneumatological desire while redirecting it toward the Spirit-filled life rather than a Spirit-baptism experience?
- Consider the corporate dimension of Spirit baptism: you have been Spirit-baptized into the same one body as every other genuine believer in Christ. Think of three or four believers whose pneumatological tradition, theological position, or spiritual culture is very different from yours. How does the doctrine of Spirit baptism change the way you think about your relationship to them? Do you treat them as fellow members of the one body into which the Spirit has baptized all of you? Or does theological distance function as a de facto denial of the pneumatological unity that 1 Corinthians 12:13 establishes?

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

1. Before studying this lesson, what was your understanding of Spirit baptism? Did you understand it as a conversion-moment incorporation into the body of Christ (the position this lesson defends), as a second-stage experience subsequent to conversion (the Pentecostal position), or something else? Where did you acquire your understanding? And what specifically do you find most challenging or most clarifying about the exegetical and pastoral position this lesson presents?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–13 carefully. Paul begins with a body analogy (v. 12) and then grounds it pneumatologically (v. 13). What is the logical relationship between verse 12 and verse 13 — is verse 13 illustrating verse 12, or explaining it, or providing its pneumatological ground? And note that verse 13 ends with “we were all made to drink of one Spirit” — a second all-inclusive statement parallel to “we were all baptized.” What does the double universality (“all baptized” and “all made to drink”) contribute to the argument? Is the drinking a separate event from the baptism, or the same event from a different angle?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 12:1–11, then 12:28–31. In verse 11, the Spirit distributes gifts “just as He wills”. In verses 28–30, Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions (all expecting “No” as the answer): are all apostles? prophets? teachers? miracle-workers? healers? tongue-speakers? interpreters? What is the cumulative effect of these negative answers for the Spirit-baptism debate? If all believers have been Spirit-baptized (v. 13) but none of the specific gifts is universal, what does this establish about the relationship between Spirit baptism and the distribution of particular gifts?
4. Read Acts 8:4–25. Note specifically: Philip preaches and people believe and are baptized (vv. 12–13); the Jerusalem apostles come and pray for the Samaritans (vv. 14–15); the Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them (v. 16); the apostles lay hands on them and they receive the Spirit (v. 17). What specific features of this narrative make it unique and non-repeatable? Identify at least three details that would not be replicated in a normative pattern for individual second-blessing experiences. And what is Simon the Magician’s response (vv. 18–19), and what does this response reveal about what was visibly happening when the Spirit was received?
5. Read Acts 19:1–7. When Paul asks “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (v. 2), the disciples’ answer (“We have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit”) is theologically revealing. What does this answer tell us about the state of their belief? Is it

possible to be a genuine New Covenant believer and not know about the Holy Spirit? And what does their baptism “with John’s baptism” indicate about their spiritual condition before Paul’s arrival? Are these disciples who need a second-stage Spirit baptism, or disciples who have not yet truly converted to the New Covenant?

6. Read Ephesians 4:1–6. The “seven ones” of verses 4–6 are seven unifying realities that ground the community’s call to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (v. 1). What is the function of the “one baptism” in the list — is it establishing a theological fact, making a practical argument, or both? And what does the placement of “one baptism” between “one faith” and “one God and Father” suggest about its importance as a unifying reality?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

7. The lesson argues that the four transitional Acts narratives (Pentecost, Samaria, Cornelius, Ephesus) are unique, unrepeatable, redemptive-historical events rather than normative patterns for second-stage Spirit-baptism experiences. The Pentecostal responds: every narrative in Acts is historically unique, but narratives can still establish normative patterns — just as the description of early church practices in Acts 2:42–47 is often treated as normative for contemporary church life. How would you distinguish between the Acts narratives that are intended to be normative and those that are not? What hermeneutical principles guide that distinction?
8. The lesson proposes that the Corinthians’ problem — gift-pride and community division — was addressed by Paul’s Spirit-baptism universality argument (“we were all baptized”). How does this context affect the interpretation of Spirit baptism? Is Paul’s primary concern in 1 Corinthians 12:13 to define Spirit baptism theologically, or to make a community-unity argument that Spirit baptism is one of the tools for? Does the rhetorical purpose of the verse in its context affect its doctrinal significance?
9. The lesson presents Spirit baptism as primarily corporate in its orientation (“into one body”) rather than primarily individual (empowerment of the individual believer). The Pentecostal tradition’s Spirit-baptism theology is primarily about individual empowerment. Does the lesson’s emphasis on the corporate dimension of Spirit baptism account for the genuine individual empowerment that the Spirit provides through the baptizing/incorporating work? Or does the corporate framing undervalue what the Spirit does in and for the individual believer?
10. The lesson argues that the Charismatic tradition’s desire for pneumatological fullness is right but its theological location of that fullness (in a second-stage Spirit-baptism) is wrong. The correct location, the lesson proposes, is in the Spirit-filled life commanded in Ephesians 5:18. Is this distinction between Spirit baptism (wrong location) and Spirit filling (right location) a satisfying response to the Charismatic’s experience of having received what she calls Spirit baptism — a powerful, transformative encounter with the Spirit that changed her life? How does the cessationist doctrine account for the genuine

spiritual transformations that many Charismatics associate with their Spirit-baptism experience?

11. The pastoral summary of this lesson is “you have everything in Christ.” How does this statement function in relation to Colossians 2:10 (“in Him you have been made complete”) and Ephesians 1:3 (“blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”)? Is “you have everything in Christ” a license for spiritual complacency (I have everything, so I don’t need to pursue anything), or does it function as the foundation for a specific kind of spiritual pursuit (I have everything, so I can pursue the filling of what I already possess)?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

12. The lesson identifies two directions in which the doctrine must function: correcting Charismatic pneumatological anxiety and correcting cessationist pneumatological complacency. Which of these two corrective functions is more needed in your own spiritual life and in the community you serve? If you tend toward Charismatic anxiety, what specific conviction would most liberate you? If you tend toward cessationist complacency, what specific pursuit would most revive your pneumatological vitality?
13. The lesson proposes studying the four transitional Acts narratives in their full contexts to demonstrate their unique redemptive-historical character. After doing this study, identify the single most persuasive reason you found that each narrative is non-repeatable: one reason for Pentecost, one for Samaria, one for Cornelius, one for Ephesus. Which of the four do you find the hardest to read as non-normative, and why?
14. The corporate dimension of Spirit baptism — you have been Spirit-baptized into the same one body as every other genuine believer — has practical implications for how you relate to believers from very different pneumatological traditions. Name a specific person or community of believers whose pneumatological tradition is significantly different from yours. How does the Spirit-baptism doctrine change the way you think about your relationship to them? What would it look like to treat them as fellow members of the one body into which the Spirit has baptized you both?
15. The lesson’s pastoral summary: if you are in Christ, you have been Spirit-baptized; you are not a second-class Christian waiting for a second experience; you have everything in Christ. Write this out in your own words as a personal declaration. Then identify the specific spiritual context in which you are most likely to forget or doubt this declaration — the circumstance in which you are most susceptible to the pneumatological anxiety of feeling spiritually insufficient. What would it look like to recall and speak this declaration in precisely that circumstance?

Prayer Focus

Open this lesson with a reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12–13 and then a moment of corporate reflection: “We were all baptized into one body.” Allow the word “all” to do its pneumatological work — not as an abstraction but as a specific, personal, individually inclusive claim. If you are a genuine believer in Jesus Christ, you were included in Paul’s “all.” You have been Spirit-baptized. This is not a hope or an aspiration; it is the apostolic declaration of what has already been done to you and for you by the Spirit’s sovereign act at the moment of your conversion. Sit in that reality for a moment before the prayer begins: I am in the body. I am Spirit-baptized. I have been incorporated. I am not outside, not on the threshold, not in the waiting room.

Begin the prayer with a corporate act of pneumatological liberation — the specific, named release from the anxiety that the two-tier system creates. If anyone in the gathering has carried the burden of feeling spiritually insufficient because they have not had a Spirit-baptism experience, invite them to bring that burden to God and to receive in its place the assurance of 1 Corinthians 12:13: you were Spirit-baptized when you believed. The Spirit who incorporates believers into the body of Christ incorporated you at the moment you first turned from sin and trusted in Christ. The Spirit who is the *arrabōn* of your inheritance has been with you since that moment. Receive the freedom of this: there is no second-stage experience to seek, no threshold to cross, no spiritual elite to envy. You are in the body.

Pray then for the corporate dimension of Spirit baptism — the one body into which the Spirit has baptized all believers. Ask God to deepen the participants’ awareness of their pneumatological unity with every genuine believer, including believers from very different theological and pneumatological traditions. Pray for the cessationist and the Charismatic, the Reformed and the Wesleyan, the liturgical and the free-church Christian — all Spirit-baptized into the same one body, all genuine members of the community that the Spirit has constituted. Pray for the healing of the divisions that the two-tier pneumatological system has created and for the recovery of the unity that 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 4:4–5 ground in the one Spirit and the one baptism.

Close with the missional prayer that Acts 1:8 warrants. Every Spirit-baptized believer is a Spirit-empowered witness. Pray for the specific mission contexts represented in the gathering: the Jerusalem of your immediate neighborhood, the Judea of your regional community, the Samaria of the people groups that feel foreign or distant, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Ask the Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost — the Spirit who has baptized every believer into the body and who empowers every believer for witness — to use the Spirit-baptized community gathered in the room as His instrument for extending that witness into each of these concentric spheres. Close with the words of Acts 1:8 as a commission rather than merely a fact: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses.” You have received the power. You are Spirit-baptized. Go.

*“There is one body and one Spirit,
just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
one God and Father of all
who is over all and through all and in all.”*
Ephesians 4:4–6, NASB 1995

Key Texts: 1 Corinthians 12:1–31; Ephesians 4:1–6; Acts 2:1–41; 8:4–25; 10:34–11:18; 19:1–10;
Matthew 3:11; John 1:33; Acts 1:5, 8; Colossians 2:10; Ephesians 1:3; 5:18

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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