

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT (IMMERSION) & SPEAKING IN TONGUES

This statement is an attempt to articulate a belief system on behalf of West Ridge concerning the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Speaking in Tongues. The principles that are expounded here can also apply to the other supernatural gifts of the Spirit with some modification. It is our belief that all Christians can and should aggressively pursue being immersed in Holy Spirit (the Baptism in the Holy Spirit) as an ongoing measure that impacts our lives repeatedly and practice speaking in tongues if we desire, along with adopting a belief system that makes room for God to program our spiritual make-up in such a way that we allow Him to manifest whatever gifts He so desires in our lives. If some of the following discussion seems a little clinical, please forgive me, but it is a doctrinal position and needs to be treated as such. The sources for the research portion are varied and include some seed thoughts from the standard Charismatic and Spirit Sensitive position, with some variation that reflects the author's point of view.

What is commonly identified as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the express empowering that follows a greater yielding to the Spirit's activity in our lives and a desire on both His part and ours for intimacy. Every believer is introduced to the Spirit in salvation in what can be considered as a non-experiential way, Baptism in the Spirit, or immersion, has been seen as a separate and distinct experience that all believers are exhorted to enter into, but not all seek to participate in. Immersion in the Spirit's presence is an experience that is to follow conversion in an ongoing and dynamic way throughout the life of the believer. As we yield ourselves to Holy Spirit, He fills us with His presence in intimate expressions of impartation. Baptism by immersion in the fire of God is an experience that transcends the non-experiential placement into Christ through regeneration that happens at the initial point of conversion (**I Corinthians 12:13**).

This encounter between the submissive Christian and Holy Spirit is a function of obedience to the Holy Scriptures where we are told to: "be filled with the Spirit" (**Ephesians 5:18**). The Greek verb 'be filled' is in the present tense which implies that this is an experience that we are to live in now and are to enjoy. The verb is also a command in the passive voice. This tells us that the Baptism in the Spirit is something that we cannot control or manipulate. It is a work of God.

Because the phrase be filled is in the present indicative active, this is an experience that has a definite point of origin, with the opportunity for subsequent encounters through-out the believer's lifetime. This experience of yielding to the Spirit's presence allows the believer to serve God with greater fervency and to serve man with greater zeal and authenticity. Baptism in the

Spirit opens the believer up to the Chrisms (Gifts of the Spirit) of His presence. The impartation of spiritual gifts allows the believer to become more effective in evangelism and in expressing mercy to those who are in need. As such, we are then enabled to walk in the fullness that God has destined for us as we display His power and presence.

We then are enabled TO RECEIVE (**John 20:22 & Acts 1:5**) what was promised as a gift and has been IMPARTED following the ascension (**John 7:9 & Acts 2:38, 39**).

All believers are entitled to, and should ardently expect, and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian Church. With it comes the enduement of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (**Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31**). This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (**Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-46; 11:14-16; 15:7-9**). With the baptism in the Holy Spirit come such experiences as: an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (**John 7:37-39; Acts 4:8**), a deepened reverence for God (**Acts 2:43; Hebrews 12:28**), an intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work (**Acts 2:42**) and a more active love for Christ, for His Word and for the lost (**Mark 16:20**).

Speaking in tongues is a primary primer gift of the Holy Spirit. As such, tongues as a gift are a sterling introductory gift into the world of Holy Spirit manifestations among us. The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is normally witnessed with the physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (**Acts 2:4**) as a normative experience, at least among most modern Pentecostal and Charismatic seekers. The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues, but is different in purpose and use (**1 Corinthians 12:4-10, 28**).

Tongues has a double application for those of us who have received this most important of gifts. It is for personal edification and for public exhortation. The gift of tongues can also be a beautiful addendum that can be used in singing before the Lord the hidden praise expressions that reside in our hearts. As a private gift, tongues can be utilized for self edification (**I Corinthians 14:2-4**). Glossolalia is a practical devotional gift that can aid us in our intimate times of communicating with the sovereign Lord. Whether as a compulsory act, or as 'moved upon by the Spirit', tongues is an important piece of equipment in the believer's spiritual arsenal. As a spoken gift that is one of the lesser expressions (a gift that utilizes the natural abilities of man. In this case: speech), tongues can help us to believe God for greater expressions (gifts that are contingent upon God alone to enact, such as healing, miracles, etc.) of gift experiences as we mature. This doesn't imply that the verbal gifts are less spectacular or insignificant simply because they utilize natural abilities. All spiritual gifts are

birthed by Holy Spirit. This simply acknowledges that participating in the transitional gifts helps us to acquire greater faith and a platform to believe God for more.

The Bible gives us five examples from the early Church, as varied members were baptized with the Holy Spirit. In three of the encounters the recipients all spoke with tongues. The other two are simply silent concerning the actual experience, leaving us to deduce the principle of practice from the other source material. Some have argued that you must speak in tongues to be filled, while others see it as just one manifestation that can accompany the infilling. Both positions have some merit, but both miss the essential point. Speaking in tongues is a good gift from God that should be sought after by those who love Holy Spirit and desire to see His gifts manifest. The modern evidence seems to indicate that speaking in tongues is a gift that Spirit Filled believers are to be in possession of.

On a personal note, the author of this position was baptized in the Spirit on the night that salvation was entered into and spoke in tongues verbally a day later. This encounter with the Spirit was so profound that he was dumbstruck initially out of fear of such an awesome God. This event occurred in October of 1977. Since then, there has been an ardent desire to be a practitioner of glossolalia every since and the author speaks in tongues on a daily basis, as well as expressing many other gifts as the Spirit allows.

As Christians become believers and practitioners of supernatural experience through Spirit Immersion, it is imperative that we accept that speaking in tongues and all of the other gifts that are identified in the Scriptures are for the Church today and should be aggressively sought after by His body, regardless of ones personal practice. They are bestowals of grace by the third person in the blessed Trinity, whose heart is to lead into a practical life that emulates the Character of Christ. His gifts allow us to uniquely function and flow as He leads us in the great adventure of faith known as Christianity. These gifts allow us to build up the body of Christ and to effectively spread the Gospel message around the world.