

No Shortcuts to Spiritual Maturity
Mark 1:8, Acts 1:5, 1 Corinthians 12:13

Slide 1

Susen and I were stationed in Turkey for a few years while I was in the military and each year we would travel as much as possible to see the country.

One year, while on vacation, Susen and I took what looked like a short cut through the mountains since it looked like a good road on the map.

But looks were deceiving. In fact, to call it a bad road would have been too kind. A trip that should have taken an hour or so took us almost a whole day.

We found ourselves on a one lane, gravel road that switched-back on hundreds of hair-pin curves in some of the steepest mountains in Turkey and there were no guard rails.

And it really became scary when we encountered one of the many large logging trucks bearing down on us. You see, sometimes shortcuts aren't all they're cracked up to be.

Now, this illustration will become clearer towards the end of this message, but right now I want you to remember the short intro to Mark I presented last week from Mark 1:1-8.

At that time we studied most of the passage, but in verse 8 John dropped a bombshell that I didn't feel I could easily cram into that message.

So today we're going to look at the part I left out. Look at Mark 1:8, "*I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*"

Slide 2

The key passage explaining Spirit baptism is found 1 Corinthians 12:13, *“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free, we were all made to drink of the one Spirit.”*

Before proceeding, let me point out that the if your translation begins with, “For **BY** one Spirit we are all baptize,” that is a mistranslation.

The second word in the verse is the Greek word *en*, which, in this context, cannot mean anything other than *“in.”*

John and Jesus both said that Jesus would be the baptizer and the medium with which Jesus would baptize would be the Holy Spirit. While in John’s baptism, John was the baptizer and water was the medium.

Now, what Paul’s telling us in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is that, in the baptism in the Spirit, believers are immersed with the Spirit into *“the body of Christ.”*

“The body of Christ” is a term Paul used for believers in the New Testament age. It described their integral relationship with Christ. In other words, Jesus is the head and we’re members of Christ’s body.

We don’t have time to delve too deeply here, but this idea teaches that when we come to Christ, we become a member or a part of Christ.

Just like my arm, or my stomach, or my toes, or my feet are parts of my body with each having a particular function. They’re only alive because the body is alive, governed by the head.

There’s a vital, organic relationship of the body parts to the body, and likewise, when we trust in Christ, we enter into a vital, organic relationship with Him.

So, the “body of Christ” is a synonym for all believers from Pentecost until Jesus returns.

There are many theological ramifications with 1 Corinthians 12:13, but let me give you three quick observations about this passage:

First, when we hear the word baptize or baptism, we only think of it in terms of the religious rite we practice as Christians, but the Greek word used here was a common word which meant to “*dip, submerge, or immerse*” something.

It was used by wool makers when they submerged plain-colored cloth into colored dye, so that the wool was completely changed.

When the Corinthians read this, the rite of baptism would have been uppermost in their minds.

They would have understood Paul to be saying, “So with one Spirit we all were submerged, or immersed into the body of Christ.”

Second, it’s important to note the verb tense in this passage.

When Paul says “*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.*” This phrase, “*were all baptized*” is in what Greek scholars call the aorist passive tense.

The aorist passive tense refers to “a simple action received one time in the past.” So, Paul’s literal meaning is, “*For in one Spirit we all were immersed into one body at ONE point in time in the past.*”

Lastly, note that Paul says that ALL the believers in the Corinthian church were baptized with the Spirit.

In other words, there were not some who had experienced this Spirit-baptism and some who hadn’t. They ALL had been baptized.

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So, when did the baptism in the Holy Spirit take place?

This is not an academic question because the baptism in the Holy Spirit is one of the most misunderstood, mischaracterized, and misinterpreted concepts in the Bible.

Look at Acts 1:4-5, *“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

Jesus told His disciples to wait for the promise of the Father. The promise was that, just as John had said, Jesus would baptize them in the Spirit.

There’s an important key that unlocks the secret of this *“baptism in the Holy Spirit.”*

Again, that key is found in the Greek language. The tense of the word “baptize” in Acts 5 is the punctiliar passive future tense.

I know that sounds like mumbo-jumbo, so here’s what you need to remember.

The punctiliar passive future tense was used in the Greek of an action that was to take place in the future at ONE particular time, ONCE FOR ALL.

In other words, Jesus was saying this: *“John baptized with water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit—at one exact time, once-and-for-all.”*

So, when was this once-and-for-all, particular event that Jesus promised? It happened on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit was a **ONCE-IN-HISTORY EVENT**—which took place on the Day of Pentecost and was never to be repeated again.

When the Spirit was given at Pentecost, believers in the church age were baptized into Christ's body, with the Holy Spirit, **ALL AT THE SAME TIME**.

In other words, baptism in the Spirit isn't something that happens to believers individually at their request, or even something that occurs at salvation.

Rather, it's something that happened involuntarily to **ALL** believers in the church age collectively, at a single moment in history—an act which believers had no active part in receiving.

The **EFFECTS** of this baptism (that is, “submersion” or “immersion”) in the Spirit, aren't realized until one believes in Jesus, but that's true of Christ's redemption on Calvary as well.

Just as our redemption was sealed by Jesus on the cross, our salvation doesn't affect us personally until we believe.

Likewise, we were all baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, but don't actually receive the Spirit until we're saved.

So, if you're saved today, you were baptized in the Holy Spirit 2,000 years ago. It's not an experience **AFTER** salvation, nor even something that occurs on the day of your salvation.

It happened one time—once-and-for-all, on a single day, the day of Pentecost, over two thousand years ago.

THAT was the baptism in the Holy Spirit which John and Jesus looked AHEAD to in the Gospels and in Acts, and which Paul referred BACK to in 1 Corinthians 12:13.

One of the world's great New Testament Greek scholars says it this way: *"The baptism in the Spirit by Christ of every believer into His body is a historical event similar to His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and coming again."*

Christ did it once-and-for-all when He sent His Holy Spirit in Acts. It is not something that we experience, but something that Jesus Christ did once-and-for-all in joining all believers into His body."

This explanation helps 1 Corinthians 12:13 make more sense. Remember, Paul's literal meaning, by the tense that he used, is, *"For in one Spirit we all were baptized [at ONE point in time in the past] into one body."*

All New Testament believers have been baptized with the Spirit into Christ's body because Jesus baptized them way back at Pentecost.

John and Jesus both pointed to a singular, one-time event that was to happen in the future, while Paul was looking back on that singular event that had already occurred.

So, if you're saved today, you've ALREADY been baptized in the Holy Spirit! You can't ask for and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit because it's not something you have an active part in receiving.

Jesus ALREADY baptized you in the Holy Spirit, and every other believer in the church age, 2,000 years ago on the Day of Pentecost.

Praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit is like asking for your inheritance from your parents after they had already given it to you.

They'd say, *"What are you talking about? We've already given you your inheritance. We can't give it to you twice."*

Look through the New Testament and you'll find that, though we're commanded to be repeatedly FILLED with the Spirit (which simply means to be constantly controlled by the Spirit), we're never told to be BAPTIZED in the Spirit.

Why? Because it was already done two thousand years ago.

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Conclusion

So, what personal applications can we draw from this somewhat technical study this morning?

First, in order to be in the body of Christ, you have to be saved. Have you come to a place where you realized your need for God and turned to Jesus Christ as your Savior?

You can't be saved by your good works and obedience to Biblical commandments, or participation in a church or denomination, or by doing religious things.

Salvation is a gift from God that comes by recognizing that you are a sinner before a holy God.

There is nothing you can do to earn God's favor. Jesus paid the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross in your place.

If you'll turn from your sin and trust in Jesus as your Savior, He'll give you eternal life.

You'll be put you into a living, vital relationship with Jesus, placed into His body, and given a spiritual gift with which to serve Him.

Second, if you're saved, let me warn you to be careful about shortcuts in your Christian life. Like the shortcut Susen and I took in Turkey, it may look good, but it could turn out bad.

Because there are many things in Christianity that purport to give you a boost in the Christian life. Things that allegedly help you leap from spiritual babyhood to maturity.

Our Charismatic and Pentecostal brethren talk of "being baptized by the Holy Spirit." The Nazarenes and some old-line Methodists talk of a "second blessing" after salvation that can conceivably lead you to a state of sinless perfection.

Some say you can jump to the head of the pack by attending some special seminar, or by espousing some particular doctrinal scheme, like Calvinism or Arminianism, or through the teachings of a particular teacher or preacher.

But all of these are false hopes that leave believers discouraged and disillusioned when the boom falls and they realize that they are no better—or at best, only marginally better—Christians than they were before.

One of the most important keys to the Christian life is that there are **NO SHORTCUTS** to Christian maturity.

There are no shortcuts; no magic bullets; no panaceas. Spirituality is never a giant leap. You learn a little here, and a little there.

Maturity is a multitude of tiny steps—one after the other. Each previous one necessary for the next.

The Holy Spirit matures believers like a cheese maker matures cheese—slowly but surely, until the time is right.

So, if you're a believer, the question for you is NOT "*Have you received the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit',*" or have you received the second blessing, or have you gone to the latest seminar, but...

- Have you been in the Word this week?
- Have you been obedient to God this week?
- Have you spent time with God in prayer this week?
- Have you surrendered to the Lord's control of your life daily this week?
- Have you been in church or a Bible study so you can hear the Word preached and taught?

THESE are things that ultimately produce growth! We're changed a little bit each day we as we learn God's Word and obey what it says.

Pray that God will help you to work at it patiently day by day, and not look for some magic bullet that will be a shortcut. In fact, what you think is a magic bullet actually short-circuits God's plan for your life.

So be patient; be faithful; keep on keeping on; study the Word; pray, be faithful to God's house; hang around Christians; have godly inputs into your life. THESE THINGS mark the road to spiritual maturity.