

Baptism/anoointing with the Holy Spirit

This topic is given special significance in the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement. Indeed, baptism with the Holy Spirit is an important event in the life of a Christian. We agree completely with this but we intend to share our belief through the following pages that God's love for His children is impartial and full, immediately when they accept His invitation to follow Him. Therefore, the Holy Spirit fills the heart of the believers at the very moment of their repentance without any time delay. We intend to explain why we believe that this Holy Spirit baptism as well as anointing is an immediate response from God when a believer repents and is manifested through a changed life—the work of the Holy Spirit. This is in contrast to the mainstream Charismatic/Pentecostal belief which we consider to be erroneous in this point.

The topic has been divided into four broad sections and will be followed by a conclusion.

1. Promises about the Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament (NT).
2. Is there any time-delay for the Holy Spirit baptism/anoointing?
3. How is the Holy Spirit baptism/anoointing manifested?
4. Misinterpreted passages on Holy Spirit baptism/anoointing.

PROMISES ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (NT)

The term occurs in all the four gospels and is first mentioned as the words of John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*"

Mark 1:8 "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Luke 3:16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

John 1:33 "I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'"

John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the one who is mightier than he himself. He said that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. John called the Jews for repentance and regret from their sins. But it would actually be Jesus, who gives them the heavenly power through the Holy Spirit to live godly lives while following His example.

On the day of Pentecost (a Jewish festival) in the year 30 A.D., this prophecy was fulfilled. The disciples were earlier hiding behind locked doors because of fear of the Jews (John 20:19). After they had received the Holy Spirit on this very day they proclaimed the gospel with great courage and wisdom (Acts 2:14).

IS THERE ANY TIME DELAY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM/ANOINTING?

This is a major point emphasized by the Charismatic/Pentecostal teachings—existence of a delay between repentance and the Holy Spirit baptism. Although some Pentecostal denominations do accept that the Holy Spirit baptism can be at the very moment of repentance, these are nevertheless considered to be rather exceptional cases. We would like to clear up in this section on the basis of Biblical passages if there is any such delay.

Unique situation of Jesus' immediate disciples: existence of a delay between repentance and Holy Spirit baptism

“When the *Counsellor* comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.” (John 15:26–27)

Jesus promised His disciples that He will send the Holy Spirit from the Father. In this way, John the Baptist's prophecy was still valid that it will be Jesus who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. But according to Jesus, it would not happen until he goes back.

“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” (John 16:7)

Therefore, Jesus saw it necessary to go to the Father before He sends the Holy Spirit to His disciples. This was in spite of the fact that the disciples who were following Jesus had repented already. Some of them actually had been John the Baptist's disciples. John the gospel writer and the apostle interpreted the reason for this delay while quoting Jesus at the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles where Jesus spoke to the crowd.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this *he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*” (John 7:37–39)

These passages explain the unique situation of the disciples that although they were following Jesus having left everything for Him, they received the Holy Spirit only later, after Jesus had been glorified. This ultimately happened on the day of Pentecost in the year 30 A.D., while the disciples were waiting just as Jesus commanded (Acts 1:4, 5, 8), actually unaware of how Jesus' promise was going to be manifested.

Christians who converted after Pentecost 30 A.D.: Holy Spirit baptism at repentance—fullness without time-delay

Once the Holy Spirit was given on Pentecost 30 A.D., repentance and Holy Spirit baptism were no longer two separate events. This is visible in the promise Jesus made concerning the Holy Spirit in his last night discourses.

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you” ...
... Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 14:15–17, 23)

Jesus initially speaks about the Holy Spirit who will be in the disciples and later in verse 22, about the Father and Himself. This implies that it is the Triune God who makes His home in us when we receive the Holy Spirit. Just as we cannot imagine to receive a part of the Father and a part of the Son (Jesus Christ) at repentance, neither is the Holy Spirit poured only partially into the heart of a new convert. All that God wants from us is to love Him and hence, to keep His commands (verse 15).

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit into a new convert's heart is also a response of God out of His love for and his joy about a newly repented soul.

“... I tell you, there is *rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*” (Luke 15:10)

... because *God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.* (Romans 5:5)

Holy Spirit at repentance: is it baptism or not?

There are some Charismatic/Pentecostal teachings that try to harmonize the Biblical passages with their own belief by calling the giving of the Holy Spirit at repentance as something else than the ‘anointing that one receives later.’ We wish to refute this claim and show that the God of the Bible does not give only a reduced quantity of His love to the one who yearns for Him.

Much of the difficulty arises because in now-a-days ‘Christianity,’ repentance has lost its value. Unfortunately, in various denominations, people are easily accepted as Christians if they say with mere words that they believe in Jesus as their saviour often without a clear change in their lives. This gives rise to introducing another event when the person changes ‘completely’ and receives a ‘special anointing.’

In the Acts of the Apostles and in the other letters of the NT we see a very clear respect for the words of Jesus as to who can be included in the Church or who should remain in the Church. There were clear measures for repentance and also painful decisions as exclusion from the Church.

Repentance in the Bible is not a feeling but is based on truth and facts. True repentance means that one needs to assess his/her life and not try to defend his sins from the past. There is a clear wish in such a person to come to the light and be assessed also by other Christians and to give the task of justification entirely into Jesus’ hands, thereby, living out of God’s forgiveness. When one repents, he does not want to live anymore as he did earlier. In this state, although the believer yearns eagerly for God, he might be weak due to his past sins for which he needs special support from God and from the church.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death ...

... However, *you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him ...*

... For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but *you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”* ... (Romans 8:1–17)

God gives His Spirit fully so that His children, including the newly converted brother, experience the deep relationship with Him that Paul describes in verse 15. *Why would God do it only partially just in the beginning when a newborn Christian has to struggle strongly to live according to his new recognitions?* Denying the fact that God pours out the Holy Spirit fully shows that one does not connect repentance with a serious decision to turn away from sin and strive for holy life.

Some Charismatic denominations speak about a two-group Christianity which is clearly rejected in the passage above. Paul does speak about two kinds of people but clearly not about two groups of Christians. Those who live according to the flesh cannot please God (verse 8) and are against God (verse 7) and living in this way, it leads to death (verse 6). This group of people are not Christians. The Charismatic teaching defines “Christians” without the Holy Spirit baptism as fleshly Christians which is not meant here in Rom 8 at all. Some groups like The Pentecostal Mission go on to define different heavenly places for those who have/do not have the anointing in the Holy Spirit. These complicated teachings are simply attempts to appease those who do not yet have the “anointing” as they say.

The reason given by the Charismatics/Pentecostals for not yet receiving the anointing in such cases is often attributed to the person's sins. The emphasis then is no longer on the need for the person to assess his life and ask for God's forgiveness. Unfortunately, instead they suggest praying and waiting for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

By contrast the letters of Paul repeatedly emphasize the immediate filling of Holy Spirit in a believer's life at the very moment of repentance.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ... (Ephesians 1:13–14)

On the day of Pentecost 30 A.D., Peter himself preached to the Jews with boldness what they will receive as a response from God for their decision to repent.

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

The sub-sections that follow will further strengthen our claim that the giving of the Holy Spirit at repentance is in fact the baptism/anointing.

Holy Spirit is a person: no scope for partial filling

The Holy Spirit is a person who cannot be divided into parts like a mass of water. It is true that the working of the Holy Spirit is often compared in the Bible with that of water that revives, refreshes and quenches one's thirst. But such passages never attribute the features of a mass of water like division or accumulation to the Holy Spirit. They never describe God first giving only a portion and later the full extent. The OT passages promising the Holy Spirit using the comparison with water always speak in terms of fullness: *Isaiah 32:14–16; 44:1–5; 41:17–20; 58:11; Joel 3:18; Ezekiel 47:1–12.*

The eastern religions/philosophies that preach an impersonal God however, often describe God's being to be divisible and additive, like energy. This is very far from Christianity, and is not the personal God who revealed Himself in the Bible.

Paul in his letter to Titus spoke about the salvation when one repents and what follows immediately.

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, *He saved us*, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us RICHLY through Jesus Christ our Saviour*, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3–7)

In the context Paul speaks about repentance. It is described how the transition occurred from living in sins to being washed and renewed *by* the Holy Spirit whom he poured out upon us *richly*. This means that repentance and receiving the Spirit richly (i.e., fully, since the word richness for God cannot mean that he gives the Spirit just partially but fully) cannot be regarded as two separate events, which may happen with time delay.

If someone has not received the Spirit richly, he is not washed, renewed and regenerated. As a consequence, such a person is not saved, not justified and is not an heir of the eternal life (verse 7).

In another passage Paul connects receiving the Spirit fully with being a member of the church.

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and *all the members of the body*, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. *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 12:12–13)

The phrase ‘to be made to drink’ is again an expression of fullness and expresses unity in the Church as its members share in the same Spirit. This is for every member of the body as soon as one becomes a member, i.e., when one repents and is accepted into the Church. As was already stated above, the Spirit is a person and can give himself only completely and not partially. If he gives himself to drink he does it fully and NOT first just a sip of himself and later everything. This is also expressed in John’s gospel.

For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. (John 3:34)

If there were by any chance, two steps of receiving the Holy Spirit there should be two groups or two kinds of Christians in the church according to the quantity of the Spirit they have. As mentioned earlier, 1 Corinthians 12 does not give such a picture about the Church at all. In the whole chapter, Paul says that each and every member of the Church is very precious because the same Spirit lives in him by whom he confesses Jesus as his Lord and from whom he has received gifts (1 Corinthians 12:3–11). There are differences in the gifts, in the ministries and in the effects but Paul does not speak about differences in the quantity of the Spirit (having Him partially or fully) although it would be very appropriate to mention it in verses 4–6 if such a distinction existed. *All gifts in verses 8–10 are signs that someone is filled with the Spirit—not only speaking in tongues, unlike the typical Charismatic teaching that emphasizes tongues as a clear sign that someone is baptized with the Holy Spirit.*

Some Charismatic/Pentecostal teachings also speak of “in-dwelling” and consecutively a continuous “in-filling” of the Holy Spirit. This is again based on the imagination of the Holy Spirit being like a mass of water which has already been explained to be far from the Christian understanding of God.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit: no waiting time in a Christian’s life

The teaching of a delayed baptism/anointing in the Holy Spirit implies that there is a waiting time between repentance and this event. The Charismatic/Pentecostal teachings encourage such ‘Christians’ to pray earnestly that they can receive the anointing. Based on the passage in Titus 3:3–7, pointed out in an earlier sub-section, a major problem comes in understanding if such people are Christians in the first place.

As explained earlier, Rom 8:9 states that “anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.” Paul also admonishes the Galatian Christians, reminding them of the reason they received the Holy Spirit (most of whom had a non-Jewish background) who were in the danger of adopting Jewish ceremonial laws.

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (Galatians 3:2)

This passage further shows that the Christians did not have to pray earnestly to receive the Holy Spirit. It has been already explained that when one receives the Holy Spirit, God gives His Spirit fully, not partially.

The *relationship with God* starts at repentance through His dwelling in us *by the Holy Spirit*. *This relationship can be strengthened by our obedience* (good decisions, devotion, and prayer) but also *weakened by our disobedience*. Expressions such as “be filled with the Spirit” in Ephesians 5:18 or “do

not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” in Ephesians 4:30 show that it also strongly depends on us through our obedience, how much the Holy Spirit can work in us.

Although one receives the Holy Spirit when he becomes a Christian, she/he still has the free will to submit or disobey the Holy Spirit that dwells in that person. Paul therefore encourages the Christians “to walk by the Spirit,” just as they “live by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

The first Christians were praying fervently just after Peter and John came back from facing the threats from the Council and experienced great strengthening in their faith by the Holy Spirit:

... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

We find the expression ‘being filled with the Spirit’ also in other situations in Acts when the Holy Spirit strengthened someone in a difficult situation: Acts 4:5–10; Acts 13:9–12. Being filled with the Spirit in such cases has a different meaning than e.g. in Acts 2:4 or elsewhere when somebody repented and received the Holy Spirit (e.g., Acts 9:17). It is not the beginning of the relationship with the Spirit but a strengthening of it and experiencing His power and help in a special way.

When we read about a Christian that he was full of the Holy Spirit it does not mean that he was baptized with the Spirit while others were not but it means that by his obedience, the work of the Holy Spirit was very visible in his life, e.g. Acts 6:5—*they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit*. It certainly does not mean that the other six brothers were not baptized with the Holy Spirit in contrast to Stephen.

HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT’S BAPTISM/ANOINTING MANIFESTED?

This is the second major point of contention with the Charismatic/Pentecostal teachings that we would like to explain on the Biblical base. Some examples can be seen clearly in the Acts of the Apostles. We would like to reiterate here that the anointing in the Holy Spirit is a response of God, immediately when one repents and yearns for God’s help to not live anymore in sins.

Newness of life

Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” ...

... So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls ...

... and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need ... (Acts 2:38–47)

The joy of having repented and having received the “gift of the Holy Spirit” (verse 38) was immediately visible in the lives of the new converts. They would not have earlier been able to do on their own, all that they were doing as is mentioned in verses 42–45. The freedom from the worldly things and their wish to share everything out of love, along with those who follow God was in perfect harmony with the call of Jesus (Luke 9:23–25, 58; John 15:12).

Standing up for God

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13)

This was just one of the several examples when the disciples who had been with Jesus, after having received the Holy Spirit (and also His anointing) surprised the educated rulers with their boldness. This is in contrast to the very same disciples who were behind locked doors out of fear of Jews (John 20:19), when they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit empowering them that they were able to keep the words of Jesus in Luke 9:26 (to stand up for Jesus). It was also due to this strength that Stephen did not fear the Jews but spoke boldly and kept a loving and thankful attitude even to the point of death.

And fixing their gaze on him (Stephen), all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel ...

... When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 6:15–7:60)

In the letter to the Hebrews, the writer reminds the Jewish Christians about the sufferings they endured even in material things when they repented. This would not have been possible either without the strength they received through the fullness of the Holy Spirit when they were enlightened. They are encouraged in this passage to persevere in Him and not to expect something especially new now!

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. (Hebrews 10:32–35)

Example of Paul's repentance

Acts 9:1–22:

... As he (Paul) was travelling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting," ... (verses 3–5)

... Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; ... (verse 10)

So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; ... (verses 17–18)

... and immediately he (Paul) began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.' All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, 'Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?' (verses 20–21)

The above mentioned passage speaks for itself that in the case of Paul, being filled with the Holy Spirit was not accompanied immediately with speaking in tongues (unlike what the typical Charismatic theory states) or any other visible gift of the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid his hands on him. This is in spite of the fact that Paul did speak in tongues, in fact even more than other Christians (1 Cor 14:18).

Example of Cornelius

Cornelius was a Roman centurion within a decade after the Christian church came into existence in a town near Jerusalem called Caesarea. He was not a Jew by birth but still was a devout man fearing the God of the Jews along with his entire household (Acts 10:1–2). God led Peter to his household to preach the gospel and the result had a significant pioneering impact on the Church concerning the universality of Jesus' gospel. Until then, all Christians had basically a Jewish background.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God ... (Acts 10:44–46)

It is noticeable that the Holy Spirit was poured out at the very event of the first Gentile family's repentance. It is worth mentioning here that the baptism or anointing in the Spirit was received before the water baptism (verse 47). This also contradicts the typical Charismatic teaching concerning the sequence being: repentance, water baptism and then Holy Spirit's baptism.

Speaking in tongues: was it the only sign for the Holy Spirit's anointing?

As is evident from the example of Paul's repentance, the baptism in the Holy Spirit was not necessarily followed by speaking in tongues. In fact, in 1 Cor 12 (esp. verses 8–10 and verses 27–30), tongues appear only as one of the many other gifts of the Holy Spirit. Besides, this passage also shows that not all have the gift of tongues. It is therefore wrong to say that one receives the anointing of the Holy Spirit only if he has received the gift of tongues.

PASSAGES MISINTERPRETED CONCERNING HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM/ANOINTING

Samaritans' repentance: was there any time delay in their Holy Spirit baptism?

Philip went down to the city of Samaria ... when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike ...

Peter and John ... came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus ... (Acts 8:5, 12, 15–16)

As was mentioned earlier about the evangelism at the house of Cornelius being a historic event, so was the conversion of the Samaritans who were not considered to be God's people and fellow brothers by Jews of Galilee and Judea. We can get a brief insight into the separation that existed among the Jews and Samaritans through the talk that Jesus had with the Samaritan woman in John 4.

The preaching of Philip led to their repentance and this was valid and acceptable to God. But for the unity of the Church (which had only Jewish Christians till then) and confirmation of such an event, it was necessary that Peter and John as Jesus' apostles (who were also the pillars of the Church) visit and acknowledge them as fellow brothers. The significance of their arrival was to confirm the unity with the new converted Christians.

Based on our discussion in earlier sections, God must have given His Spirit to them that they can stand firm in their new faith. The question arises therefore, what is meant by "that they might receive the Holy Spirit" when Peter and John "came down and prayed for them" and also that the Spirit "had not yet fallen upon any of them." Did they and others (who saw them) experience something especially miraculous in this situation?

As is evident from verse 18, “Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostle’s hands,” there was a visible event that happened here. Therefore, verse 17 “they were receiving the Holy Spirit” needs to be understood as *receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, most probably speaking in tongues*. The receiving of this supernatural gift confirmed that they had the same Spirit that the apostles and other Jewish Christians had till then. This confirmation was about the work of the Spirit in their lives and was not the moment of pouring out of the Spirit in their hearts. The receiving of the gift was from God and not from Peter and John.

John the Baptist’s 12 disciples

... “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said to him (Paul), “No we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit” ... (Acts 19:2)

These disciples were baptized into John’s baptism and were followers of John the Baptist’s teaching, either through John directly, or most probably through John’s other disciples. It is possible to imagine that they were men living in Asia Minor and had repented from their sins and had been trying to live a righteous life after having heard about John the Baptist. Although John the Baptist pointed to Jesus being the one to whom his disciples should turn to (John 3:28–30), not many immediately followed or understood it. These disciples whom Paul met in Ephesus did not even hear “whether there is a Holy Spirit,” a clear indication that they did not yet have any confrontation with a Church or the right Christian teachings. Therefore, they cannot be Christians although they are called disciples (verse 1) and Paul even reckons them to have believed (verse 2). *They heard about Christianity for the first time through Paul*, and immediately accepted it. Therefore, it is understandable that they were baptized and their new belief in Jesus along with the consequent receiving of the Holy Spirit was also confirmed to them when they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Their situation is significantly different to Apollos’ situation in the verses just before in Acts 18:24–28, although he also knew only the baptism of John. Some of these aspects are:

- He had been instructed in the way of the Lord.
- He was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus.
- He was fervent in spirit (just like in Rom 12:11, a feature that is associated with Christians).
- He spoke boldly in the synagogue.
- On hearing him, Priscilla and Aquila took him and explained the way of God *more accurately*.

These are all features of a person led and made bold by God’s Spirit, having a much clearer understanding of the teachings of Jesus than the twelve mentioned earlier and was able to quickly come to unity with brothers who were already in the Church from whom he was also humble to learn the way of God more accurately. Consequently in Apollos’ case, there is no mention of any water baptism or even a special sign of having received the Holy Spirit unlike the distinct visible sign among the twelve disciples of John.

Believers’ prayer and God’s response

... how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? ... (Luke 11:13)

Jesus teaches his disciples in this passage to know the grace and immense mercy of God to respond to those who cry out to Him for help. Jesus contrasts it with men who in spite of being evil also know how to give good gifts to their own children. The Greek text for the above passage says just as it has been quoted above and does not say “heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him *for the Spirit*” as many Charismatic/Pentecostal groups interpret and organize special meetings to “ask God” for the Holy Spirit.

The parallel passage in Matthew 7:11 substitutes the words “Holy Spirit” with “good things.” This confirms that Jesus’ intention with the above passage was not that we should request God for giving His

Spirit again and again, but that we can ask God with trust for things that are in His will and that God gives all the necessary help through the Holy Spirit—through fellowship, strengthening and leading of His Spirit. An example for such a prayer is in Acts 4 where the disciples did not ask for the Holy Spirit but for God's support and God strengthened them through His Spirit, whom he already had poured out on them.

Before the day of the feast of Pentecost, Jesus said: "Receive the Holy Spirit"

... He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" ... (John 20:22)

As was explained earlier about Jesus' glorification and going away being a pre-requisite for the sending of the Holy Spirit (John 7:39 and John 16:7), this passage should be considered in the same light. In John 20, Jesus was still among His disciples after his resurrection and had not yet ascended to the Father in heaven and therefore, the disciples surely did not receive the Holy Spirit in this situation. The disciples were rejoicing at the appearance of Jesus after being hopeless following his crucifixion. Jesus had to remind them of his last night discourses before his arrest in which he shared with them that he would soon leave the earth although he presented himself to them after his resurrection. He also wanted them to know that they would not be left as orphans but would have the Counsellor sent to them. The act of breathing was symbolic to help them understand the connection between Jesus and the Holy Spirit whom they were to receive some days later (Acts 1:5).

SUMMARY

When we respond to God's call with the decision to entrust our lives to Him, however weak we may be, He empowers us with all that He has to offer that we can experience His love, peace and power in fighting against sins. He makes it possible through His Spirit whom He gives richly to those who yearn for Him at their repentance. A Christian does not have to wait for being baptized or anointed by the Holy Spirit as God gives Himself completely in the relationship to His beloved child who repents. Without repentance, we cannot be His children and cannot be his followers, Christians!