

Baptize

(βαπτίζω = 'baptizo')

To dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk), to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe, to overwhelm

Acts 1:5, "For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." The New Testament speaks explicitly of people being "baptized in" (or "with") the Holy Spirit in only six places (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5 and Acts 11:16). In each of these scriptures, baptism in the Holy Spirit is compared and contrasted with the water baptism of John using almost identical language. This language is very important to those who wish to understand what baptism "in" (or "with") the Holy Spirit means. The baptism of John and that in the Spirit is alike in that both are accomplished by full immersion. The verb used to describe these baptisms is *baptizo*, meaning to bathe or immerse. However, the baptism of John is performed through the use of water (physical substance) and the other with the Holy Spirit Himself.

In the three passages in the Gospels and in Acts 1:5, the promise is made that people will be baptised "with" the Holy Spirit, and it is stated that the believers in the upper room on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the Gentiles gathered in the household of Cornelius (Acts 10), had been immersed "in" the Holy Spirit. In all of these passages, the Greek text uses the preposition *en* with the verb *baptizo* to describe the relationship between the Spirit and the believer who has been so baptized. *En*, usually translated "in" or "within," is a relatively simple preposition which literally describes, for example, the relationship between a swimmer and the water of the swimming pool. Used with *baptizo*, it simply means, "completely immersed in," especially when it is contrasted with the instrumental role of water in John's baptism. Baptism with the Holy Spirit, then, is being completely immersed in the Spirit, and this should be "visible" after the event.

This is exactly what was seen in Acts 2 and in the early days of the Church. The believers, as a group, were so completely immersed in the Spirit that other things simply were not important to them anymore. This immersion was symbolized by the wind and the tongues of fire, but was really an event that occurred on the spiritual realm. Because the Holy Spirit is God, He is everywhere, and could not have made Himself any more present around the believers in a physical sense after Pentecost than He was before. But after Pentecost, great and powerful things started to happen through the hands of those people that had been fully immersed in the Spirit. Note, they were spiritually immersed in Him, as viewed from outside themselves.

Perhaps we refuse to give the word "baptism" its full meaning in this context because we prefer an in-church religious "experience" to an on-going relationship that will seriously interfere with our lives if permitted to fully express itself. We want to obey a list of man-made rules and have in-church "experiences" to reassure us that God is on good terms with us so that we can live our lives our own way. Nevertheless, Holy Spirit "baptism" is an on-going immersion in the Spirit of God, not a religious experience that happens in a church service. We must be continually and constantly "being filled" with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

Blessed

(μακάριος = 'makahrios')

Blessed, exceedingly blessed and fortunate, favoured by God, privileged, envied, happy, elated.

Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We need to appreciate what it means to be "blessed" because, as some have rightly noted, the Greek word used by Matthew, *μακάριος* ('makahrios'), can also be translated as "happy." Happy, however, is not the correct translation in the context of the Beatitudes. Happiness is subjective; the same things do not always make everybody happy. Here, Jesus makes objective judgments about the spiritual state of the citizens of His Kingdom. He reveals, not what they feel like, but rather what God thinks of them.

People with the qualities listed in the Beatitudes gain God's approval. And because God thinks well of them, they are *"blessed."* Note, God's blessing is far broader and exceedingly more important than merely being happy! It all hinges on whether God thinks well of us. Quite simply, we are "blessed" because God is pleased with us! Blessings are a result of God's response to our actions and attitudes. You will also notice that the second half of each Beatitude reveals what the blessing is; *"for they..."* or *"for theirs..."* As surely as all eight of these qualities should be part of each of us, so each of us should share in the eight blessings. Just as each of the eight qualities provides us with a broad overview of our responsibilities, the eight blessings also give us insight into the privileges that come to us because we are meeting those responsibilities. Our privileges (blessings) are only there because God is well pleased with us.

The Old Testament concept of what it is to be "blessed" relied heavily on the physical and material rewards that were provided by God as a result of a covenant relationship. Jesus, however, introduces something very different. The citizens of His kingdom are not considered "blessed" because of any physical or material rewards received, but rather, because of God's positive response to their attitudes and actions. Off course, the by-product of God taking pleasure in His people is physical and material rewards, but this is not the primary cause. The main reason why we can be called "blessed" is because our Heavenly Father has seen something in us that has caused Him to be delighted.