

What Did John the Baptist Predict?

A Biblical Theology of Spirit Baptism in the Gospels

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Introduction

There is an ongoing debate regarding the nature and identity of the baptizing work of Jesus that John the Baptist predicts in all four Gospels (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Only one of our Lord's great signs is told to us in each of the four, but all four emphasize this somewhat enigmatic prediction by John. Many questions are commonly raised. What is the OT background, and how might that background be relevant to understanding this baptism? How might John's predictions relate to similar predictions regarding the Spirit in the Gospels? For example, is the same work referenced in other places in the Gospels without the language of "baptism" (e.g., John 7:39)? Should we identify Paul's reference to a baptism/immersion in/by the Spirit, which has some connection to the Body of Christ (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν; 1 Cor 12:13), with the baptism predicted by John the Baptist?¹ Are these "baptisms," whether in the Gospels or Paul, experiential rather than merely positional? And even if we were to argue that it is experiential, what experience is being described by John?

To illustrate some of the debate, among those who view it as experiential, some equate Spirit Baptism with regeneration.² Or, they at least equate it with becoming a Christian.³ Grudem suggests that it "refers to *all* that the Holy Spirit does at the beginning of our Christian lives" (emphasis added).⁴ Similarly, Dunn's influential work on the question defined the "baptism in or gift of the Spirit" as "the chief element in conversion-initiation... a very definite and often dramatic *experience*, the decisive and climactic experience to which the Christian was usually recalled when reminded of the beginning of his Christian faith and experience."⁵ Many writers have emphasized

¹ Some would want to include Gal 2:27's εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Eph 4:5's ἐν βάπτισμα, and Col 2:12's συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ in the discussion. However, some or all of these could be references to water baptism. 1 Cor 12:13 is different in that, like John's prediction, it includes the modifying phrase ἐν... πνεύματι. However, some have still argued that 1 Cor 12:13 describes something different from the previous references to Spirit baptism in the Gospels and Acts. See, e.g., Howard M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Critique of James D. G. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 98–102.

² E.g., "This initial regeneration is sometimes called in Scripture the 'baptism in the Holy Spirit.'" John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 48. See also William Fitch, *The Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 44; Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 764. Cf. "Baptism by the Spirit appears to be, if not equivalent to conversion and new birth, at least simultaneous with them." Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 801. However, Erickson earlier connected John 14:12; 16:7; and Acts 1:4–5 with an empowerment from the Spirit. *Ibid.*, 796.

³ E.g., "Baptism by the Spirit means being made a Christian by the Spirit." Edwin H. Palmer, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: The Traditional Calvinistic Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 110. Palmer makes it clear later in his work that he does not believe that this ministry is unique to the NT (*Ibid.*, 154–5), which illustrates the difference among writers within the debate over what constitutes a "Christian."

⁴ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 948. He later helpfully outlines five specific benefits that are received as part of this baptism (*Ibid.*, 952).

⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 4. Emphasis original. Scrobie goes as far

that John's prediction of a future event ("he will immerse/baptize," βαπτίσει) implies that this was not a ministry or gift that was present in the OT. Therefore, it is possible that John was predicting something unique to the era that began at Pentecost.⁶ After all, if this is a soteriological event along the lines of or perhaps equated with Paul's teaching regarding union with Christ, does that mean that OT saints who will enter the Messianic banquet (Matt 8:11) did not require this gift?⁷ Of course, this dilemma is avoided by those who argue that Spirit baptism is unique to the era that began at Pentecost, *but* deny that it is experiential, instead arguing that it is positional or judicial.⁸ However, as we will see, does this do justice to Luke's description of this promised gift as "power from on high" (ἐξ ὕψους δύναμιν; Luke 24:49)?

Therefore, many, while maintaining that Spirit baptism is experiential, have argued that this gift is given to believers subsequent to their initial conversion. In other words, they would differ from Dunn, who saw it as the "chief element in the conversion-initiation" experience. For example, Harvey describes Jesus' work of baptism in the Spirit "as the continuing source of power for present life and ministry" and the "promise of power for those who respond to Jesus' ministry."⁹ Or, some

as to state that "Christian baptism confers the gift of the Spirit." Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 283.

⁶ E.g., Pettegrew describes Spirit baptism as a "broad term among the complex of figures of speech for describing the Spirit's new covenant ministry," which also "places the believer into the body of Christ." Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 190. See also Gregg R. Allison, "Baptism with and Filling of the Holy Spirit," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 16 (2023): 4–20; John R. W. Stott, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964).

⁷ Some have answered "yes," arguing that OT saints did not receive these soteriological benefits. E.g., Chafer writes, "By the Spirit's baptism into Christ, the believer is joined permanently unto the Lord; he has put on Christ, and therefore, being in Christ, partakes of all that Christ is. This vital union is the ground of every position and possession into which the child of God has entered." Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 6:41. He adds, "To be baptized into Christ's Body is to come under the power and Headship of Christ; it is to be joined unto the Lord, to be identified with Him, to partake of what He is and what He has done—not for a moment, but unalterably... to be placed in Christ by the baptizing agency of the Holy Spirit results in a new reality of relationship in which the one thus blessed comes under the power and Headship of Christ, which position supplants the relationship to the first Adam and is itself a new organic union with the Last Adam, the resurrected Christ." *Ibid.*, 6:140.

⁸ E.g., "Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the judicial, objective, non-experiential placing of a true believer into the church, which is the body of Christ. It is a position in which God views the believer of this age differently than He regards other believers and bodies of saints. It is somewhat analogous to one's citizenship; it is not subjective." Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity: Volume 2: The Doctrines of Man, Sin and the Holy Spirit* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 312. See also John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 357. Brock helpfully distinguishes between Spirit baptism as an "act that positionally unites all believers from the time of Pentecost to the Rapture into the universal church" from "the experiences that are requisite with that new position... bestowed by that same Spirit." Mark D. Brock, "The Relationship of Spirit Baptism to Union with Christ" (Th.M. thesis, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), 57. However, this raises questions regarding (1) the identify of these unique Church experiences and (2) whether the Gospels and Acts would support this limitation of Spirit baptism to the positional basis for these experiences. Due to the focus of his study, Brock intentionally focuses on the Pauline corpus.

⁹ John D. Harvey, *Anointed with the Spirit and Power: The Holy Spirit's Empowering Presence*, Explorations in Biblical Theology (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 58–59. Cf. "the disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit (inaugurating their public ministry) to empower them for a worldwide witness.... The corollary to this is that if being 'baptized in the Holy Spirit' is about vocation, then it is not about salvation—except insofar as it is given only to those who are saved." Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke: Trajectories from the Old Testament to Luke-Acts*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 81.

might describe it as an additional work of sanctification received following conversion.¹⁰ Depending on the author, this may allow for some genuine Christians who have not yet received this experience. However, this appears to create tension with Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 12:13, which states that "all" believers receive this gift.

Often, these questions are answered using categories from systematic theology. This paper will attempt to address some of these questions by briefly examining the Gospels (and even more briefly Acts, because Luke should be allowed to finish his story somewhat!), employing an inductive biblical theology approach that recognizes the progressive nature of revelation as a means to *complement* a systematic approach. As we do this, there is danger in including texts that do not belong in the discussion, committing what Kaiser has called "the method of the analogy of faith gone to seed!"¹¹ So, we will begin with the three Synoptic passages that directly refer to a baptism associated with the Spirit. These passages should begin to inform how the identical expression is understood in 1 Corinthians 12:13. From there, we will try to proceed cautiously through the Evangelists' writings, looking for passages that can be reasonably linked to John's prediction.

The Synoptics

John's Prophecy in the Synoptics

In all three Synoptics, John's prediction is given as part of a contrast between John's act of baptizing and the act that would be performed by the more powerful one who was coming. Luke explicitly indicates that John made this statement regarding the "one more powerful" in response to inquiries regarding the Messiah (3:15–16). Keep that in mind.

The choice of βαπτίζω to describe this future work was likely made simply to emphasize the contrast between John's actual work of immersing people in water and this future work of immersing individuals in the Spirit. So, the Synoptics were not creating a technical term when they used βαπτίζω to describe John's ministry, but rather were using a word commonly used for Jewish ceremonial washings, which can be translated as "to immerse."¹² Therefore, the same would apply to the "immersion in the Spirit" (βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ). The word could again be translated as "immerse," or, since it is being used metaphorically, "overwhelm."¹³ Adopting the translation "to wash" or "to purify" assumes, perhaps incorrectly, a certain significance for the Evangelists' metaphor.

Why would John answer a question about the Messiah with a prophecy about this coming "immersion"? Although the LXX never uses the verb βαπτίζω in conjunction with the Spirit or the Messiah, several OT texts that use liquid metaphors for the Spirit likely stand behind John's

¹⁰ Milton S. Agnew, "Baptized with the Spirit," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14 (1979): 7–14.

¹¹ Walter C. Jr. Kaiser, "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit as the Promise of the Father: A Reformed Perspective," in *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville: B & H, 2004), 28–29.

¹² Eckhard J. Schnabel, "The Language of Baptism: The Meaning of βαπτίζω in the New Testament," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century: Essays in Honor of D. A. Carson on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 226–27. Cf. BDAG, s.v. "βαπτίζω," 164[1].

¹³ Schnabel, 242–43. Cf. "to plunge," BDAG, s.v. "βαπτίζω," 165[3].

prediction.¹⁴ Isaiah had predicted that Jerusalem would be desolated as a covenant curse “until the Spirit comes upon [or “is poured out”] on us from on high” (ἕως ἃν ἐπέλθῃ [הַרְגֵּם מִלְּבָרָא in BHS] ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς πνεῦμα ἅφ’ ὑψηλοῦ; 32:14–15). After using the image of pouring out water on dry and thirsty ground, God promises Jacob, “I will place [or “pour out”] my Spirit on your descendants” (ἐπιθήσω [קָצַף in BHS] τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τὸ σπέρμα σου), causing them to spring up like grass (Isa 44:4–5). Ezekiel predicted a day when God would bring Israel back from exile and restore her to her land, where she will live in safety. As part of this prophecy, God promises that he would never again reject the people because, as he puts it, “I will pour out [יִהַרְבֵּשׁ] my Spirit on the house of Israel” (39:29).¹⁵ As part of his Day of the Lord prophecy in Joel, God says, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (ἐκχεῶ [ἰρῶשׁ] ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα; 3:1 [2:28 in English versions]), evidently resulting in all classes of people, men and women, young and old, and even slaves, being able to prophesy and receive visions.¹⁶ Finally, on the other side of the partial (and temporary) return after Cyrus’ decree, Zechariah still looks forward to a “day” when Israel will be fully and forever restored. “On that day,” God promises to destroy Jerusalem’s enemies (Zech 12:9), but also says, “I will pour out on the house of David and those who live in Jerusalem a spirit [Spirit?] of grace and mercy” (ἐκχεῶ [יִהַרְבֵּשׁ] ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Δαυיד καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας Ἱερουσαλημ πνεῦμα χάριτος καὶ οἰκτιρμοῦ; 12:10).¹⁷

These passages all describe the future restoration of Israel, so it can be reasonably concluded that John’s original hearers (and the Gospel’s original readers) would have understood this Spirit baptism as an eschatological sign related to Israel’s coming restoration, which likely explains why this greater baptizing work is a sign of being the Messiah.¹⁸ To put it simply, this “immersion in the

¹⁴ Block similarly identifies six passages that use a “liquid idiom” for the Spirit by including Isa 29:10, but he then quickly excludes this sixth passage since it deals with a different function. Daniel I. Block, “The View from the Top: The Holy Spirit in the Prophets,” in *Presence, Power, and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, ed. David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 202.

¹⁵ Here I am following BHS because the LXX understands this clause as a reference to God’s judgment: ἀνθ’ οὗ ἐξέχεα τὸν θυμὸν μου ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραὴλ (“because I poured out my wrath on the house of Israel”).

¹⁶ The repetition of ἰρῶשׁ / ἐκχεῶ (“pour out”) in verse 29 [3:2 LXX] indicates that the various merisms between the two occurrences of the verb are intended to define what Joel means by “all flesh.” Therefore, the revelatory gifts described in conjunction with the merisms should be understood as the result of the “outpouring” of the Spirit.

¹⁷ “The reference to ‘a spirit’ (*rûah*) could simply refer to a disposition Yahweh gives his people. Yet given the background of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Joel, who all associate the sending of Yahweh’s Spirit on the day his kingdom comes (e.g., Isa. 32:15; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28–32), it is attractive to see God’s Spirit at work here.” Anthony R. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 263.

¹⁸ Coming from different perspectives, writers have frequently observed that John would have likely been thinking of Israel’s restoration when he made his prophecy regarding the Spirit. See, e.g., James B. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke–Acts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 42–43; Max Turner, *Power from on High*, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 9* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 170–87.

It should also be noted here that the OT frequently uses the imagery of God “pouring out” his wrath/judgment. See, 2 Chron 12:7; 34:21, 25; Job 12:21; Ps 75:8; 107:40; Is 42:25; Jer 1:14; 7:20; 14:16; 42:18; 44:6; Lam 2:4; 4:11; Ezek 6:12; 7:8; 13:15; 14:19; 20:8, 13, 21; 21:31; 22:22, 31; 30:15; 36:18; 38:22; Dan 9:11, 27; Hosea 5:10; Nahum 1:6; Zeph 3:8. This contrast between the outpouring of wrath versus the outpouring of the Spirit may explain why John chose to include a statement about an “immersion in fire” along with his “immersion in the Spirit.”

Spirit” is a sign of the “last days.” Relevant here would not only be the content of any OT prophecies being evoked by references to the Spirit but also John’s Elijah-like appearance, his location in the wilderness, his preaching of Isaiah’s “good news” regarding the “kingdom,” and his call to repentance. Since these OT texts all involve Israel’s restoration *and* the ability that she will one day have to live harmoniously with each other and her God, John’s prediction of a coming “immersion in the Spirit” could at least hint, even before we get to later NT revelation, to work that will have *communal* implications.¹⁹ You could reasonably argue that these liquid metaphors in the OT point to a soteriological or redemptive work, and thus John’s metaphor might also refer to something soteriological (in the sense of Spirit causing one’s initial repentance and faith). However, conversion is not the only implication of these texts, especially the prophecy of Joel, which also points to the ability to perform certain tasks.

Even if we draw on John’s Gospel (and we will shortly), Grudem notes that it “is hard to draw any conclusions from these four passages with respect to what baptism with the Holy Spirit is.”²⁰ However, I think we can make some initial observations. From these original predictions made by John, we learn that (1) Jesus (he is the agent) will (future tense) baptize/immerse people with/in the Spirit (the “substance” or medium),²¹ (2) John seems to believe that his audience would understand what this meant (so it likely has an OT background) and sees it as evidence that Jesus is more powerful, and (3) this is not only an important component of John’s gospel preaching but is also significant enough to be included in all four Gospel accounts. In Matthew and Luke, the baptism of the Spirit is associated with eschatological judgment, and in John’s account (as we will see below), it is at least hinted, as it was in Luke, that the ability to baptize with the Spirit is evidence that Jesus is God’s Chosen One.²²

If we proceed through Mark’s Gospel, looking for further information regarding this coming baptism, and if we do not include the disputed longer ending, the only passage that *may* shed some light on John’s prediction is Mark 13:11, where Jesus’ followers are promised that, whenever they find themselves before hostile authorities among the nations, they need not worry about what to say

¹⁹ E.g., Block argues that the “pouring out” of the Spirit in these passages “signified the ratification and sealing of the covenant relationship.” Block, “View from the Top,” 204. “By pouring out his [Spirit] upon the returned exiles, YHWH seals them as his covenant people and guarantees that he will never again leave any of the house of Israel at the mercy of her enemies and that he would never again hide his face from them, as Ezekiel and his contemporaries had witnessed.” Ibid., 205.

²⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 945.

²¹ All of the relevant passages regarding Spirit baptism, including 1 Cor 12:13, use the preposition ἐν and the dative πνεύματι. There has been some debate regarding whether the preposition is instrumental or locative. Since we are talking about “immersion,” there is not much difference between the One “in” which you are immersed or the One “with” which you are immersed. Either way, the Spirit is metaphorically parallel to the water that would normally surround an immersed person, and thus the preposition is very likely locative and should not be translated as “by,” which implies that the Spirit is the agent of the immersion. Jesus is the agent of the “immersion.”

²² For the “immersion in fire” being what it sounds like, i.e., judgment, see, e.g., John A Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886), 51; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 130; Charles L. Quarles, *Matthew*, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022), 142–43.

We are assuming here that the correct reading is John 1:34 is ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ θεοῦ as found in ℣¹⁰⁶ ℵ* it^{b, c} ff* syr^c. However, the point would likely still stand if the baptism of the Spirit was evidence that Jesus was the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, as in most MSS.

“for you are not the ones speaking, but the Holy Spirit.”²³ Matthew’s Gospel leads to the same result with this promise of the Holy Spirit’s assistance found in 10:18–20 (see also Luke 12:11–12).²⁴ Since neither Evangelist directly links this promise to John’s prediction regarding the Spirit, the most that can probably be said is that there is a *hint* that the coming immersion in the Spirit would enable those who testify of Jesus in hostile contexts. It would then perhaps be analogous to the speaking gifts described in Joel 2:28. However, Matthew and Mark do not explicitly state that this enablement follows immersion in the Spirit, so this conclusion should be held tentatively.

The Unique Contribution of Luke

Luke, however, gives us more information than Matthew and Mark. As is widely recognized, he uniquely emphasizes the Spirit’s work in the lives of God’s people. Gabriel announced that John the Baptist would “be filled” (πλησθήσεται) with the Spirit (1:15). Both of his parents, Elizabeth (1:41) and Zechariah (1:67), are “filled” (ἐπλήσθη) with the Spirit.²⁵ Righteous Simeon had the Spirit “on him,” had a prophecy “revealed to him by the Holy Spirit,” and was led “by the Spirit” into the temple courts (2:25–27). Even before we arrive at John’s ministry, we are reminded that the Spirit had been active in the lives of the righteous, enabling them to complete tasks for their God.²⁶

However, something unique occurs with the arrival of Jesus in Luke’s story. Like Matthew and Mark, Luke follows the account of Jesus’ baptism with an account of our Lord’s temptation (after a brief aside in which he traces Jesus’ ancestry). However, when he begins his pericope regarding the wilderness ordeal, Luke uniquely tells us that Jesus left the Jordan “full of the Spirit” (πλήρης πνεύματος; 4:1) and following his temptation in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus returns to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος; 4:14) and preaches in Nazareth’s synagogue from the scroll of Isaiah regarding the One who had God’s Spirit upon them (πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ) because God had anointed him (οὗ ἔνεκεν ἔχρισέν με). It is commonly recognized that Jesus is not only identifying himself in this account as the subject of Isaiah’s prophecy, but that Luke is also

²³ Some might seek to limit Mark 13:11 to a still-future eschatological age. However, because the same promise is found in Matt 10:18–20 in the context of describing a worldwide mission that will extend until Jesus’ return (see esp. 10:23), it seems better to see this as a promise to all Jesus’ followers between his two advents. Similarly, in Luke 12:11–12 there is no indication that this ministry of the Spirit is limited to the very end of this age.

²⁴ Based on what we know from the book of Acts and Paul’s epistles about the Spirit’s role in building a Christian community, we might, on a second reading of Matthew, ponder the connection between the promised gift of the Spirit and (1) Jesus’ prediction about building his church in 16:18 and (2) his instruction in 18:1–35 regarding our life together as a family that follows him. However, Matthew does not explicitly link either to the ministry of the Spirit.

²⁵ Luke appears to use πίμπλημι (in either the future or aorist tense form) as opposed to πληρόω/πλήρης to describe “sudden, sovereign, unexpected, overwhelming, incident-oriented acts of enablement; undefined as to duration, lasting as long as their purposes and situations demand; and resulting in some verbal proclamation.” Richard Gary Fairman, “An Exegesis of ‘Filling’ Texts Which Refer to the Doctrine of Filling” (Th.D. diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1986), 288. Cf. Timothy D. Crater, “The Filling of the Spirit in the Greek New Testament” (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1971), 14–48; I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 69; Max Turner, “Spirit Endowment in Luke-Acts: Some Linguistic Considerations,” *Vox Evangelica* 12 (1981): 54–55; Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 136–37, 200–1; William W. Combs, “Spirit-Filling in Ephesians 5:18,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 19 (2014): 31–34.

²⁶ The verb πίμπλημι does not occur in collocation with the Spirit in the LXX, but the related ἐπίμπλημι is used in Ex 31:3; 35:31 and Micah 3:8 to describe a “filling” of the Spirit. A similar concept is also found in Ex 28:3; 35:35; and Deut 34:9. Cf. Sirach 17:7; 39:6; 48:12. Cf. Isaiah 11:3 in the LXX, which does not closely follow the MT.

demonstrating, with his unique references to the Spirit, that Jesus' baptism was when our Lord received this anointing to carry out his ministry. The Spirit did not need to come down upon Jesus to purify or cleanse, but it did empower him. We will briefly revisit the book of Acts, but at this point, it seems reasonable to conclude that Luke wants his Christian readers to see their experience as parallel to that of their Lord.²⁷ Just as Jesus receives enablement from the Spirit and delivers a paradigmatic sermon in Luke's Gospel, Peter will receive an enablement from the Spirit and deliver a paradigmatic sermon in the Book of Acts.²⁸ Jesus rejoices "in the Holy Spirit" (τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ) and gives praise to his Father, so we should as well! When we consider the references in the infancy narrative to the work of the Spirit and the Spirit's work in Jesus' life, it is even more meaningful when Jesus tells us in Luke that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask (11:13).

Finally, Luke concludes his Gospel with Jesus instructing his disciples regarding the preaching of the gospel to all nations (κηρυχθῆναι ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ μετάνοιαν εἰς ἅφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη; 24:49). This missional context is important for understanding what is about to be said. Before they began this worldwide preaching, they were to wait. As Jesus puts it, "I am going to send you [ἐφ' ὑμᾶς] what my Father promised [τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πατρός], but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high [ἕως οὗ ἐνδύσησθε ἐξ ὕψους δύναμιν]."²⁹ It is possible that Jesus can call it "what my Father promised" because of the OT passages that promised an outpouring of the Spirit.³⁰ One of those, Isaiah 32:15, had similarly referred to the Spirit coming "from on high" (ἀφ' ὕψηλοῦ).³¹ And again, the context of the promise is the need to bear witness to Christ, and, as Bock notes, "power" (δύναμις) had already been linked with the disciples' proclamation of the gospel (cf. Luke 9:1).³² *However*, this observation also means

²⁷ The intentional parallel between Jesus' anointing in Luke and the events of Pentecost is widely recognized. E.g., Stronstad notes that "in the parallel structure of Luke-Acts the Spirit baptism of various disciples is functionally equivalent to the Spirit-anointing of Jesus, the Spirit-baptizer... the disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit (inaugurating their public ministry) to empower them for a worldwide witness.... The corollary to this is that if being 'baptized in the Holy Spirit' is about vocation, then it is not about salvation—except insofar as it is given only to those who are saved." Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 81.

²⁸ "The risen Christ clearly holds a unique status, but the earthly Jesus also functioned as a model for disciples in Acts, as the strong parallels between the two works demonstrate." Craig S. Keener, *Acts*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 1:958.

²⁹ The verb ἐνδύω is apparently being used here metaphorically for "the taking on of characteristics, virtues, [or] intentions." BDAG, s.v. "ἐνδύω," 333[2b]. Cf. Col 3:12.

³⁰ So, e.g., Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 1942–43. Bock is specifically thinking of passages that reference the new covenant. However, it might be simpler to say that Jesus is thinking of passages that speak of the "outpouring" of the Spirit. Cf. David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 968; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 906. The relationship between this and the new covenant warrants a separate study.

³¹ Along with Isa 32, Edwards notes that "on high" reminds the reader of the role the Spirit played in Jesus' birth (Luke 1:35). James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 737.

³² Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1944–45. Since Jesus return to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (4:14) and since, as we will see in Acts, Luke's reference to "power" in Luke 24:49 is a reference to the work of the Spirit, we could return to Luke's account of Jesus' life and note how frequently "power" is mentioned during Jesus' ministry (4:36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 24:19). In other words, the Spirit's role in Jesus' ministry may be referred to even when Luke does not explicitly mention the Spirit.

that if the disciples who had received power once before need to wait for additional “power from on high,” then perhaps we have an indication that this empowering predicted in Luke 24 is related to a purpose distinct from their previous preaching ministry. Something new was coming so new power was needed.

Preliminary Conclusions from the Synoptics

What can we initially conclude from the Synoptics regarding John’s prophecy? First, he does not appear to be saying that Jesus will send the Spirit to convert the disciples. The Twelve (with the exception of Judas) and many of Jesus’ other followers are presented in the Gospels as people who have already turned from their sins and put saving faith in Jesus.³³ In other words, they do not need to wait until Christ’s resurrection or the Day of Pentecost to receive the soteriological benefits produced by the Spirit. Peter, Andrew, James, and John are willing to leave families and jobs to follow Jesus (Matt 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:11; cf. Matt 19:27; Mark 10:28; Luke 18:28). Many disciples were already doing the will of the Father and so were considered by Jesus to be his family members (Matt 12:48–50; Mark 3:33–35).³⁴ Peter was able to accurately confess Jesus’ identity because the Father had revealed this truth to him (Matt 16:16–17). If read later portions of Scripture regarding the Spirit’s role in causing faith and repentance, along with Paul’s teaching regarding all men being either “in Adam” or “in Christ,” it is difficult upon returning to the Synoptics not to conclude that for many people this soteriological work of the Spirit had already occurred. Therefore, something other than initial conversion seems to be promised by John the Baptist. This reality is especially emphasized in Luke’s account because he includes a longer discussion detailing what this “fruit” would look like in the lives of the repentant (3:10–14). John baptizes those who share their possessions, do not steal or extort, do not falsely accuse people, and are content with their wages. In other words, John baptized people who demonstrated evidence of genuine repentance, but these same people were promised an additional, better baptism by the coming, more powerful One.

However, second, what is promised does not appear to be merely positional. Even if the parallel between Jesus’ ministry and the apostles’ ministry in Acts is not recognized, Luke 24:49’s reference to “power from on high” points to something experiential or enabling. Finally, what is about to occur as the Synoptics close is connected to the fulfillment of OT Scriptures, so it seems warranted to call it an eschatological sign. These final two points become clearer if we quickly look at Luke’s second work, the Book of Acts before concluding with an examination of John’s Gospel.

A Quick Look at the Book of Acts³⁵

The link between John the Baptist’s prediction and the Book of Acts may be illustrated with the following table:

³³ So, e.g., J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 161; Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 79. For a longer argument, see D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Baptism and Gifts of the Spirit*, ed. Christopher Catherwood (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 15–33.

³⁴ To this could be added some additional passages from John’s Gospel that will be examined below.

³⁵ This paper assumes things about the significance of Pentecost and how that relates to the various groups that receive a “Pentecost-like” experience. For example, as Hoekema puts it, it is widely accepted that Pentecost is the “birthday of the Christian church.” Anthony A. Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 19. If this new Body began to be formed on Pentecost, it would seem reasonable that the gifts needed for its growth were also

Passage in Acts	Audience/ Recipients	Verbs used with Spirit	Accompanying Signs or Results	Descriptions of the “Baptism”	Connection to other Passages
1:4–8	Promise to Jesus’ Disciples	ἐπελθόντος (“comes upon,” v.8)	They will be witnesses to the ends of the earth	ἡ ἐπαγγελία δύναμις (both also occur in Luke 24:49)	Jesus connects this to John’s prediction of Spirit baptism and to the promise that he has spoken about (cf. Luke 24:49)
2:1–13	Jesus’ Disciples at Pentecost	ἐπλήσθησαν (“filled,” v. 4)	Violent wind Tongues of Fire Speaking in Tongues		This appears to be the fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction concerning what would occur in a “few days” (1:5).
2:17–47	Jewish crowd at Pentecost	ἐκχεῶ (“I will pour out,” vv. 17, 18) ἐξέχεεν (“has poured out,” v. 33) λήμψεσθε (“will receive,” v.38)	Love for the church Enjoying the favor of all Praising God	ἡ ἐπαγγελία (2x) ἡ δωρεά	Peter connects what has happened to Joel 2 and calls the crowd to repent.
8:14–17	Already baptized believers in Samaria	λάβωσιν (“they might receive,” v. 15) ἐπιπετωκός (“fallen on,” v. 15) ἐλάβανον (“they received,” v. 15)	Something could be seen by Simon the sorcerer		
10:44–48	Gentiles in Cornelius’ home	ἐπέπεσεν (“fell on,” v. 44) ἐκκέχυνται (“had been poured out,” v. 45) ἔλαβον (“received,” v. 47)	Speaking in Tongues Praising God	ἡ δωρεά	Peter connects this to what occurred at Pentecost (“as we also,” v. 47). See also below.
11:15–18	Gentiles in Cornelius’ home (related in Jerusalem)	ἐπέπεσεν (“fell on,” v. 15)		ἡ δωρεά	Peter not only connects this to Pentecost (“just as upon us at the beginning”; “the same gift he gave us who believed”), but he also connects it to John’s prediction of Spirit baptism .
19:1–7	Disciples in Ephesus	ἐλάβετε (“receive,” v. 2) ἦλθεν (“came,” v. 6)	Speaking in Tongues Prophecy		Paul connects “receiving” the Spirit with a “ baptism .”

Several things can be gleaned from these texts. First, the promise and power predicted at the end of Luke’s gospel is repeated in Jesus’ words in Acts 1:4–8.³⁶ However, in his second volume, Luke adds the explicit statement that this promise is the “immersion” predicted by John the Baptist (v. 5). When Jesus repeats the promise in verse 8, he switches to the metaphor of the Spirit “coming

first poured on that day as well.

³⁶ That Acts 1:4–5 refers to the same promise as Luke 24:49 is widely acknowledged. See, e.g., Kaiser, “Reformed Perspective,” 16.

upon” the disciples, but the same event as the “immersion” appears to be in view and this “coming” will bring power for the disciple’s witness. Therefore, Kaiser’s assertion that Luke’s “doctrine of the power the Holy Spirit gives to believers” cannot be linked to “the promise of the Father about the baptizing in the Holy Spirit” seems contradicted by the biblical evidence.³⁷

Second, in Acts 2:1–13, the event that 1:5 said would occur in a “few days” happens, and it is experiential and eschatological. At first, we might think that this “filling” of the disciples in 2:4 is a special empowerment, like the ones in Luke’s infancy narratives, and perhaps not connected to the “immersion in the Spirit.” However, in 2:17–14, when Peter stands up to explain what is taking place, he not only quotes from Joel 2, using liquid metaphor three times for the gift of the Spirit, but he also refers to it twice as the “promise,” linking it back to 1:4–8. In addition, Peter specifically links this manifestation of the Spirit to the “last days” (v. 17). *Notice in 1:5 that Jesus’ reference to the baptism of the Spirit prompts a question from his disciples about the restoration of Israel’s kingdom.*³⁸ And while a discussion of the nature and purpose of tongues would take us too far off course, it is worth noting that the prophecy of Joel refers to “prophecy,” “visions,” and “dreams,” which, since Joel is using it as an explanation for why “tongues” are occurring, is at least one indication that this gift of the Spirit may manifest in various ways and not necessarily in “tongues.”³⁹ This is also seen in the fact that those who accepted Peter’s evangelistic message (v. 41) are not said to speak in tongues, but instead, these people who presumably receive “the gift of the Spirit” offered by Peter (v. 38) go about doing very “normal” acts of worship, love, and fellowship (vv. 42–47).

Finally, in four additional places in Acts (8:14–17; 10:47–48; 11:15–18; 19:1–17) we have references to other groups receiving this same gift of the Spirit that was received at Pentecost. The chart above seeks to illustrate some of the lexical connections between these passages and Acts, but 11:15–18 is an important text because Peter (1) not only tells us that what occurred in Cornelius’ home was the same gift that occurred at Pentecost but (2) he also connects it back to the Spirit baptism promised by John. The Gentiles in Cornelius’ home receive the Spirit at their conversion, but arguably the Samaritans in Acts 8 (and perhaps the disciples in Acts 19) receive it later.⁴⁰ So, it appears to be something other than regeneration taking place when the Spirit “comes upon” them. In addition, in all these cases, the gift of the Spirit is evidenced by something done by those who “receive” him. The Spirit does something to them and it can be seen, so this would seem to support MacArthur and Mayhue’s statement that Spirit baptism can be “evidence of one’s salvation.”⁴¹

John’s Gospel

What about John’s Gospel? In John’s Gospel, the Baptizer relates how the One (i.e., God) who sent him to immerse people in water told him that the man “on whom you see the Spirit come

³⁷ Kaiser, 29.

³⁸ Cf. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 87.

³⁹ To put it differently, the “immersion” or “pouring out” is the source behind any of these various manifestations of the gift, so Peter can link the events even when a different manifestation is in view.

⁴⁰ For the argument that these individuals in Ephesus were already believers before Paul’s arrival, see, e.g., Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 599. It is often said that the expression *τινας μαθητάς* (“some/certain disciples”) with the indefinite pronoun points to them not being Christian disciples, but see Acts 9:10 and 16:1.

⁴¹ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 357. However, they still oddly assert that it is a “positional act” (Ibid.).

down and remain” (ἐφ’ ὃν ἂν ἴδῃς τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον καὶ μένον ἐπ’ αὐτόν; 1:32) would be “the one who will immerse with the Holy Spirit” (ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ; 1:33). We can probably learn three things from the Evangelist’s unique telling of the story. First, it was the Father who first made this prediction regarding Spirit baptism, which might explain, at least in part, why Jesus can later call it “what my Father promised” (Luke 24:49). Second, Jesus’ ability to pour out the Spirit is a sign that he is the “Chosen One,” so again, we have an indication that Spirit baptism should likely be viewed as an eschatological sign that fulfills a Messianic expectation. Third, similar to Luke’s Gospel, John emphasizes that Jesus’ ability to pour out the Spirit is linked to the fact that the Spirit “remains” on him. In Luke’s Gospel (and to a certain extent in Matthew), Jesus is empowered by the Spirit to carry out his Messianic task. Similarly, in John’s Gospel, Jesus does not merely receive the type of empowerment that occasionally came upon God’s people in prior ages but is instead given the Spirit “without limit” (John 3:34), which means that his words should be accepted as truthful.⁴²

However, John, of course, has more to say about a future ministry of the Spirit. In 7:37–40, Jesus, on the “last and greatest day” of the Feast of Tabernacles, called those who were “thirsty” to come and “drink” from him, adding “The one who believes in me, as the Scriptures say, rivers of living water will flow from his heart” (ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ, καθὼς εἶπεν ἡ γραφή, ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ῥεύσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος).⁴³ This is relevant to our discussion, not only because Jesus is using another liquid metaphor, but because John adds the editorial comment that Jesus was referring to the Spirit whom “the ones who were believing in him were going to [or “about to”] receive” (ὁ ἔμελλον λαμβάνειν οἱ πιστεύσαντες εἰς αὐτόν). John then explains that the “Spirit was not because Jesus had not yet been glorified” (οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα, ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐδέπω ἐδοξάσθη). The word βαπτίζω does not occur in the pericope, but this account should be included in our discussion because (1) it uses watery imagery for the Spirit (2) to describe a ministry of the Spirit that is still future, and (3) like John’s original statement seems to be, in some way, a fulfillment of the OT Scriptures. Notice that after Jesus makes this statement, he is identified by some as the eschatological Prophet like Moses (7:40; cf. Ex 17:6; Num 20:11) and by others as the Messiah (7:41). However, it is not immediately clear which Scripture Jesus has in mind (cf. “as the Scriptures say,” v. 38) and what he means by “rivers of living water” flowing out of the inner recesses of his followers.⁴⁴ In John’s writings, drinking water is used as a metaphor for receiving eternal life (John 4:10–14; cf. Rev 21:6; 22:17); therefore, here, in John 7, believers appear to be conduits of this life-giving water to others. We cannot say too much based on this one passage, but

⁴² Cf. “The Spirit not only descends on Jesus, but remains (vv. 32, 33) on him. To Jesus ‘God gives the Spirit without limit’ (3:34). Some, like King Saul, experienced the Spirit’s presence and power temporarily; Jesus, the great antitype of David, never displeases his Father (8:29), whose love and whose Spirit rest on him permanently (cf. 1 Sa. 16:13; 2 Sa. 7:15). Small wonder, then, that Jesus is equipped to baptize others, not merely (as did John the Baptist) in the medium of water, but in the Holy Spirit.” D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 151–52.

⁴³ John is here using κοιλία to describe the “seat of inward life, of feelings and desires,” which is functionally equivalent to how we use the English word *heart*. BDAG, s.v. “κοιλία,” 550[3].

⁴⁴ For a recent, concise defense of the traditional interpretation that the “water” is coming out of the believer and not Jesus, which involves questions regarding the proper punctuation of the verse, see Edward W. Klink, *John*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 375. For the more difficult question of which OT passage(s) are in view, see Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 326–28.

it may point to a future work of the Spirit that enables or equips believers to carry out their evangelistic task, a work described by John as an “immersion in the Spirit.”⁴⁵

To this passage in John 7, we may be able to add Jesus’ teaching in the Upper Room in John 14–16. We are on less solid ground in doing this because, although Jesus frequently mentions the Spirit in this discourse, he does not use any image or metaphor that approximates “immersion.” However, as in John 7, Jesus describes this “coming” of the Spirit as a future reality, so it would seem reasonable for a reader of the Fourth Gospel to assume that John is giving further information about his earlier cryptic reference to the Spirit not yet being present or active in some way (οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα; 7:39). In the Upper Room, Jesus promised that the Spirit would be “another advocate” who would be “in” (ἐν) his disciples (14:16–17). This Spirit would “teach” them “all things” and “remind” them of everything that Jesus had said to them (15:26–27). This coming work of the Spirit would be so great that Jesus could even say it was good for him to depart, because after his departure, he would be able to send the Spirit (16:7–8). When the Spirit comes, our Lord promised that he would guide the disciples “into all the truth,” “speak only what he hears,” and tell them of things “yet to come” (16:12–15). So, at least for these apostles, the Spirit would not only enable but also reveal.⁴⁶ If all of these various benefits are included in the metaphor of Spirit baptism, it would indicate that the ministry would take various forms (which also seems to be an implication of Peter’s use of Joel 2).

Although this could be debated, John 7 and the Upper Room passages mentioned are arguably referring to the same ministry that John the Baptist called an “immersion in the Spirit.”⁴⁷ If so, this ministry is also described by the Evangelist as a future reality that cannot take place until after Jesus’ ascension. As in the Synoptics, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Eleven were not already “born again” prior to Jesus’ ascension. They had already come to follow Jesus, and Jesus in John’s Gospel tells us that this coming cannot occur without the Father’s drawing (6:44). They were “already clean” (15:3; cf. 13:10) and attached to the True Vine (17:14). They had received Jesus’ words and been kept by him (17:8, 12). They were already hated by the world

⁴⁵ Cf. Lewis, who calls it a “prophetic gift” given to those who were already born again, so that they could carry out worldwide evangelism. Arthur H. Lewis, “The New Birth under the Old Covenant,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 56 (1984): 43–44. As he puts it, at Pentecost, the “kingdom in its seed form has just received the divine enabling to launch its world-testimony of the Living Christ” (Ibid., 43). McCabe describes the promise of John 7 as the experiential aspect of Spirit baptism (in addition to a judicial aspect that he sees along with the experiential in 1 Cor 12:13) that “primarily involves the Spirit’s work in granting gifts to every member of his body for effective ministry.” Robert V. McCabe, “Were Old Testament Believers Indwelt by the Spirit?,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 9 (2004): 220.

⁴⁶ When the Spirit comes, one of his roles, emphasized by John, will be to communicate truth or guide believers into truth. This *perhaps* could be another way of describing the ministry predicted in the Synoptics, in which the Spirit helps Jesus’ followers know what to say when they appear before hostile rulers (Matt 10:18–20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11–12; cf. Luke 21:12–15).

⁴⁷ For this study, we will not examine John 20:21–23. At this point, it seems best to describe it, as does Packer, as an “acted prophecy” that looks ahead to Pentecost. J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 74. Packer is followed by Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 191. Carson describes it as “a kind of acted parable pointing forward to the full endowment still to come.” Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 655. Cf. Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 573.

However, it can be quickly noted that John hints at the same link between the Spirit empowering Jesus and the Spirit empowering Christ’s followers that we saw in Luke (cf. “as the Father has sent me, I am also sending you” (John 20:21b). Cf. Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 190.

because, like Jesus, they were “not of this world” (17:14). Therefore, this promised work of the Spirit must not be equated with regeneration. They had been made new, but they needed to be equipped so that others could be made new.

Conclusion

A few conclusions can be drawn from the passages examined above. First, as we have seen, the baptism in the Spirit was something predicted by John the Baptist and promised by our Lord. Second, it could not occur until after Jesus’ ascension. Third, this baptism should not be equated with conversion. Instead, on some occasions in the Gospels/Acts, it is a gift given to those who are already believers. As Atkinson notes regarding Luke’s “receiving the Spirit,” the metaphor of baptism likely refers to a “nexus of activities.” When a person is “immersed” in the Spirit it (1) does not mean that the Spirit had not already been ministering to the person, and (2) it may mean that “the Spirit has already been performing some of the associated works whose whole nexus will justify the term ‘receiving’ without operating them all, before that occasion when the nexus of activities first occurs and the person can validly be said to have received the Spirit.”⁴⁸ Therefore, even though we would be right to conclude from the rest of Scripture that believers following the exceptional cases in Acts receive this gift called an “immersion” at their conversion, there is still value in trying to identify the specific ministry of the Spirit that could be separated from conversion.

Fourth, the baptism predicted by John first occurred on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. Based on the significance of Pentecost and the information given in the Gospels, it is reasonable to conclude that this new ministry of the Spirit was intended to empower and equip the new Church for its task. Rather than simply being positional, at least in the Gospels and Acts, this baptism appears to be experiential. It is, as Luke puts it, “power from on high.” As Smeaton described it, “the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost” was “intended to found the Christian Church *and* supply it with the living organs and various gifts, by which it efficiently exercises the spiritual life for the advancement of Christ’s cause” (emphasis added).⁴⁹ To put it another way, *the Spirit does not simply mark out a new jurisdiction or place in which certain people now dwell, but instead creates a new living Body and provides the resources for its ongoing growth.* At its foundation, this new work was manifested with sign gifts and revelatory gifts, but (and this would require further study) perhaps this “immersion” in the Spirit is seen today as we use the gifted power “in its various forms” as “faithful stewards” in building the church (1 Pet 4:10).⁵⁰

Finally, this gift of the Spirit is eschatological. That is, it was something that could be pointed to as evidence that the “last days” had arrived and that the final curtain—the Day of the Lord—would soon fall on this evil age. Because of the background in Isaiah and Ezekiel, and especially because of Peter’s quotation of Joel on the Day of Pentecost, it may not be correct to say

⁴⁸ William Atkinson, *Baptism in the Spirit: Luke-Acts and the Dunn Debate* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 79–80. Here, Atkinson is following an observation made by Max Turner in his 1980 dissertation.

⁴⁹ George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (London: Banner of Truth, 1958), 231.

⁵⁰ This would go beyond an inductive study of the Gospels and Acts, but if the conclusions above are correct than (1) the baptism of the Spirit in 1 Cor 12:13a is likely parallel to ‘all given the one Spirit to drink’ (notice the water imagery) in 1 Cor 12:13b rather than being two distinct ministries. As Grudem notes, it is very hard to avoid the conclusion that Paul’s readers would have understood the baptism of 1 Cor 12:13a as something other than the baptism described with the same words in the Gospels and Acts. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 947.

that “in all prophecies of the future kingdom there is no reference to baptism by the Spirit.”⁵¹ Especially among those who commonly argue that John the Baptist did not have to define the “kingdom” (because it was the “kingdom” predicted in the OT), there should perhaps be more appreciation for the fact that John also did not seem to have to define his “immersion in the Spirit.” It can reasonably be argued that he did not need to define either because the Hebrew Scriptures already defined them. The eschatological nature of this water-like ministry of the Spirit might explain why Paul believes that its presence in the lives of NT believers is a “down payment” (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:4) or “firstfruits” (Rom 8:23) of the coming kingdom, since, in the coming kingdom, it appears that it will be the Spirit that will enable mankind to build a harmonious society together. So, as we use our gifts of the Spirit (given “for the common good,” as we are told in 1 Cor 12:7) to build up Christians assemblies, we are creating foretastes or previews of that kingdom life.⁵²

The conclusions of this study should be evaluated alongside the teaching of Paul and the remainder of the NT, and much more could have been said about Acts. More work could also likely be done on whether other themes related to the Spirit, such as the new creation, might either support or weaken the argument here.⁵³ However, even if we just had the Gospels (and are allowed to include a bit of the Book of Acts) and are going to have something that we label as “Spirit baptism” in our theological systems, we can likely create less confusion and perhaps be more faithful to Scripture if the event to which we attach that label more closely matches the event that John the Baptist predicted. At least provisionally, this study would support McCabe’s observation that Spirit baptism “primarily involves the Spirit’s work in granting gifts to every member of his body for effective ministry.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1954), 146.

⁵² It might then be appropriate to say, along with Ladd, that “It is the coming of the eschatological Spirit in history that created the church,” therefore, the church is “the product of the powers of the Age to Come.” George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 541–42. The careful reader will notice that I have deliberately avoided discussion of the new covenant and the question of whether Spirit baptism should be viewed as one of its benefits presently available to the NT Church. At this point, a cautious conclusion might be that the conditions necessary for the people of the coming age to live harmoniously in a covenant relationship with their God and each other have already been created, to some degree, in the lives of believers who belong to that coming kingdom.

⁵³ For some thoughts regarding a connection between John’s prediction and the Spirit’s role in new creation, see, e.g., Charles L. Quarles, *A Theology of Matthew: Jesus Revealed as Deliverer, King, and Incarnate Creator*, Explorations in Biblical Theology (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 180–82.

⁵⁴ McCabe, “Were OT Believers Indwelt?,” 220. As noted above, McCabe also saw a positional aspect to Spirit baptism in 1 Cor 12:13a. 1 Corinthians is outside the scope of this study. However, nothing in the Gospels and Acts appears to suggest a positional aspect. If anything, a new organism or community is being birthed through the work of the Spirit in Acts, rather than people simply changing positions or jurisdictions.