


NOR CAN THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MEAN WATER BAPTISM. OBVIOUSLY, CHRIST DISTINGUISHES
between water and Spirit baptism in Acts 1:5. The mistake made by early church fathers and some denominations is the confusion of water baptism and Spirit baptism. While there is a connection between the two in that the former is the public testimony of what the Spirit unites us to—the Christ who died, was buried, and arose from the grave—water baptism can never accomplish such a union. Furthermore, Paul uses universal language in Ephesians 4:5 when he says, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Whoever has the Lord and the faith also has the baptism. Not everyone who is or has been a believer has been immersed in water, but every believer can claim the baptism of the Spirit. And yet nowhere in the New Testament is anyone commanded to be baptized by the Spirit, which leads to the conclusion that it is an automatic occurrence which takes place at conversion, and is, therefore, a one time event. The filling of the Spirit, on the other hand, is emphatically commanded and can be repeated (Eph 5:18). In fact, the filling reoccurred to the same group of believers in the early church (Acts 2:4; 4:31). If baptism were the same as filling, it would mean that the believer could be removed from the body of Christ and then reinstated by a second baptism. As Charles Ryrie states, “such an idea is completely foreign to the Scriptures” (The Holy Spirit, p. 109).

Finally, when we say that Spirit baptism is positional or judicial, we recognize the difficulty of many to comprehend this. Some Christians believe that any truth regarding salvation must be experienced or felt to be valid. Yet they should consider that positional truth is no less “real” than experience. In fact, the former is more decisive in the sense that sometimes our feelings can play tricks on us; objective truth is substantial and conclusive. Moreover, consider the fact that other foundational doctrines are likewise judicial, such as justification by faith alone. No one can be experientially as righteous as Christ. And yet we must be as righteous as He in order to have acceptance with God. The solution is in the judicial act of God imputing Christ’s righteousness to the sinner’s account on the basis of His atoning sacrifice and by means of effectual faith. This is forensic; it is legal, yet it is definitely real in the sense of actual. And so is it with the baptism of the Spirit. We were really placed into the body of Christ when we trusted Him as Savior, even though we did not “feel” it when it happened. However, the baptism of the Spirit does produce experiential results. For example, we can enjoy the blessing of knowing that we are united with Christ; the Holy Spirit has made that possible. This spiritual bond is the eternal possession of every believer. It also means that we are united with every other believer (Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 12:12; Eph 4:3). What believer has not sensed, when traveling to a foreign country, the spiritual attachment with other Christians who do not even know his language? Further proof that we have been incorporated into the body of Christ is the witness of the indwelling Spirit that we belong to the Lord and have eternal life (1 John 5:7–12). Indwelling is not the same as the baptism of the Spirit but it is pertinent testimony that we indeed are in Christ and are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph 1:13). The baptism of the Spirit secures believers to Christ and to His body (the church) and provides for them the basis of godly living in this age. The Holy Spirit has set them apart from the dominion of sin and Satan unto God in order to walk in newness of life.