

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." – Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8)

## Introduction

I want to begin this Essentials teaching on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit by laying out a framework for understanding it. This will hopefully ensure that we are on the same page as we continue through this series. For years, I have been filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered by Him, however, upon formalizing this teaching on it in writing, I found myself consumed by way more of a technical study than I had originally envisioned. There will be some repetition in this teaching. Repetition by me is not poor editing; it is a sign of the particular importance of certain verses or concepts that will be to your advantage to read more than once to reinforce your understanding. There are two invaluable rewards for thoroughly studying this topic: the illumination of the inner workings of your own walk with Christ and a richer understanding of a great many New Testament verses.

Let us start with two Scriptures that I will use to frame some key concepts and definitions. As we move through this teaching, I will cover these in more detail.

The first comes from the apostle Peter preaching the first gospel message soon after being empowered by the Holy Spirit:

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (Acts 2:38-39)

The second comes from the apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church:

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (12:13)

Contained in these verses are two key words, "baptized" and "name," that need to be defined and thoroughly explained before we can continue.

The Greek word *baptizo*, translated in our English Bibles as "baptize," "baptized," or "baptism," means "to immerse, submerge, overwhelm." It is a derivative of the primary Greek verb, *bapto*, which means "to dip, dip in, immerse." The Greek usage of *baptizo* implies a *permanent change*, such as when a garment is dyed or a cucumber is pickled.

When believers are baptized in water they are physically dipped under or immersed in water for a moment. Water baptism in itself does nothing (1 Peter 3:21), but it is an important ceremonial act for a believer because it represents the permanent reality of his internal spiritual conversion. This teaching is not about the physical act of water baptism.

Peter told the people they would be baptized in the *name* of Jesus Christ. On the surface, this does not make any sense. How can a person be baptized in a name? The answer comes from understanding that the *name* of Jesus Christ embodies the person of Jesus Christ. Peter was telling the people that if they believed and repented they would be spiritually converted and immersed in the life of Christ. Paul explained that it is the Holy Spirit Who baptizes us into the body of Christ, the *person* of Jesus Christ.

When a man repents of his sin and believes in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit regenerates his human spirit and he is spiritually united with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He becomes part of the body of Christ and Christ lives in him. This is what happens to a person during the church age (the present dispensation) when he receives eternal salvation. *This is not being empowered with the Holy Spirit, this is the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.* This is when the Holy Spirit immerses new believers in the life of Jesus Christ.

The phrase, "body of Christ," is not some sort of religious slogan. Jesus Christ is alive, living through, and building *His* church. How does He actually do this? Jesus gives the gift of the Holy Spirit that comes upon, fills, guides, teaches, and empowers His followers so that they can bear witness to, or reveal, His life.

There is a twofold work of God here. The Holy Spirit first puts the believer into the life of Jesus Christ and then Jesus fills and empowers the believer with the Spirit. This twofold work can be seen in both of the introductory verses. Peter said the repentant would be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ *and* they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul said in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body *and* we were all made to drink of one Spirit. The focus of this teaching is the secondary work, although the first must be covered in some detail to avoid confusion.

This twofold work of God was also prophesied by Ezekiel:

I will take you [Israel] from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (36:24-27)

Jesus death and resurrection would enable believers to be spiritually regenerated and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit would equip them to hear His voice.

## Terminology is Critical

John said Jesus would “baptize” believers “with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16). Jesus told His disciples they would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5), but concerning the same experience He stressed more that they would “receive power” (Acts 1:8) and be “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49) when the Holy Spirit *came upon* them. Interestingly, the apostles and early church disciples never referred to it as being baptized with the Spirit. They called it “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38; 10:45), “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17), or simply referred to it as receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15, 17; 19:2). They reserved the term “baptized” for the physical act of being baptized in water and the spiritual act of being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Technically, there is only one baptism for a believer (Ephesians 4:5), the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. When Jesus told His disciples they would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit” He was not referring to this, which on the surface would imply that there is more than one baptism. *Jesus was referring to Himself baptizing (immersing) His church which was a one time deal.* After this, the Spirit has continued to overflow from His (already) baptized church as new vessels (believers) have been filled with living water continuing to flow from this same original outpouring. I think this is why the first apostles did not refer to it as baptized but instead as receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (Peter) or simply receiving the Holy Spirit (Paul). I also think this is why they laid hands on new believers when they prayed for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This was a symbolic act because they recognized the Spirit was continuing to flow from the Spirit-filled church into new vessels.

The term “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is commonly used today to describe the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This is incorrect terminology, not only for the reasons I just outlined, but because it implies that the Holy Spirit does this empowerment which is not true. It is Jesus Who empowers us with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit baptizes us into the life of Christ and then Jesus fills and empowers believers as an overflowing continuation of the original outpouring of His Spirit upon His church.

It is certainly sound practice to refer to it as the early apostles did with “the gift of the Holy Spirit,” “filled with the Holy Spirit,” or “receiving the Holy Spirit,” but I prefer to refer to it as *the empowerment of the Holy Spirit* for the sake of clarity. After an intense Biblical study of the topic, I think this is an apt description. It relays the reality of what this is and rightly removes the “baptized” terminology which should be reserved for believers being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. But remember, it is proper to call it the baptism with the Spirit when specifically referring to the promise of the Father that Jesus originally poured out on His church on Pentecost. The empowerment of the Spirit is what continues to

flow from Jesus' original baptism.

**In this teaching I refer to Jesus' original outpouring as the baptism with the Holy Spirit and the subsequent overflow that believers can still receive today from this original outpouring as the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.**

Do not be alarmed if you are confused. Many of the related aspects will be covered in detail throughout this broader teaching to help you properly understand how God has designed this all to work. If you are new to this or it is difficult to comprehend, do not quit! Stick with it! Once you understand God's design, your Christian life will be transformed.

## The Promise of Baptism

The prophet Joel foretold of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as follows:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

And I will show wonders in the heaven and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:28-32)

(Note that God *started* pouring out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost, but the rest of this prophecy remains to be fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>)

Jesus referred to this outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the promise of the Father. After His resurrection, He told His disciples:

"And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are *clothed* with power from on high." (Luke 24:49; emphasis mine)

Jesus' use of the word "clothed" (Greek *endyo*) here is interesting because when God empowered Jesus with the Holy Spirit He "descended on him *in bodily form*" (Luke 3:22; emphasis mine). These descriptions reveal that, through this outpouring, the Spirit overpowers and possesses the life of the disciple.

Joel's prophecy mentioned some of the subsequent effects of this Spiritual empowerment. These were prophetic utterance, visual communication (dreams and visions are "watched"), and revelation. Furthermore, the context of this outpouring is God's power shaking up the natural environment, which leads to some calling on the name of the Lord and being saved. This second point is often overlooked. The whole dynamic of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the life transformation that ensues is a spiritually intense process. There is nothing calm or normal about any of this. This was the atmosphere of the apostle Peter preaching the gospel on Pentecost when he quoted Joel (Acts 2:16-21).

Jesus symbolically referred to His soon coming baptism with the Holy Spirit as a "fire," when He declared:

*"I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! ... Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."* (Luke 12:49,51-53; emphasis mine)

Notice the exclamation points on the first two sentences. Jesus was passionately ready to upset Satan's strongholds by pouring out His Spirit. His fiery outpouring would start a bonfire in Jerusalem that would ultimately spread to all the kingdoms of the world. This fire would cause division as people would be forced to choose whom they are going to serve in the presence of the resurrected Jesus Christ alive in His people.

John the Baptist also foretold of the fire when he prophesied:

*"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."* (Matthew 3:11; emphasis mine)

John preached a baptism of repentance, which was preparation for a greater inner cleansing that was to come through Christ. He specifically said that *Jesus* would be doing the baptizing "with the Holy Spirit and fire." The outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost would come with symbolic tongues of fire, but there is a deeper meaning to this. The question is, "What does it really mean to be baptized with fire?" Before I answer this, we need to consider the historical context.

## **Fire Lights the Way in Christ**

In ancient times, the only way light was generated, other than from the sun or moon, was through fire. *Fire was man's sole source of light.* Burning oil lamps was the easiest way to maintain light for practical

night time use. Because of this, Biblical references to light shining often include fire or burning lamps. For example, Jesus taught His disciples:

“Stay dressed for action and *keep your lamps burning*, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.” (Luke 12:35-36; emphasis mine)

If one wanted to always have light for the darkness, he would have to make sure he kept his oil lamp burning continuously. Jesus’ baptizing fire would light the oil in each believer. His lamp would remain burning as he walked in the Spirit. Jesus once referred to John the Baptist as a “burning and shining lamp” (John 5:35).

In the book of Revelation, we see the seven churches symbolically displayed as seven golden lampstands. These lampstands were meant to hold burning oil lamps that would shine forth *Him* standing in their midst whose “face was like the sun shining in full strength” (1:16).

Understanding this symbolic connection between fire, oil lamps, and light gives color to other statements Jesus made to His disciples, such as:

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

Now we are ready to think about what this fiery baptism really means.

On one occasion in the temple, Jesus told the Jews: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). Through the baptism with the Holy Spirit, Jesus lit the original fire that enables His life to shine forth through His church. Like oil lamps being lit from a central fire, this baptism was meant to continually engulf new believers, igniting them in the life of Christ.

## **A New Era for the Holy Spirit**

Jesus said He had a specific job to do before He could pour out His baptismal fire:

“I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! *I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!* (Luke 12:49-50; emphasis mine)

Jesus had to first take the sin of man upon Himself (“be baptized with”) on the cross, be raised from the dead, and then glorified by God. The apostle John explained this more clearly:

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” *Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (7:37-39; emphasis mine)*

We are told that the Spirit had not yet been given, “because Jesus was not yet glorified.” The Spirit had been involved with man throughout history, but a fundamentally new era with the Spirit awaited the church. The night before He went to the cross, Jesus explained to His disciples how the Spirit was going to function with them in a new way:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and *will be in you* (John 14:16-17).

The Spirit was going to go from just dwelling with (being alongside) them to indwelling them.

The sin nature of the human spirit was the barrier that had to be removed so that believers could be baptized into the person of Jesus Christ and subsequently filled with the Holy Spirit. By taking the sin of man upon Himself and conquering death through resurrection, Jesus removed this barrier. Peter wrote that God “has caused us to be born again to a living hope *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1 Peter 1:3b; emphasis mine). The *resurrection* of Jesus paved the way for those who believe in Him to be born of the Spirit (born again) and baptized into the life of Jesus Christ.

When a believer is born again his spirit is transformed. The sin nature is removed from his spirit and it is united with the Holy Spirit, as Paul wrote: “he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Corinthians 6:17). In this *inseparable* union, the Spirit, or Helper, is with him *forever*. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was required for believers to obtain this “born again” existence.

After being empowered by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter declared:

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. (Acts 2:32-33)

Peter confirmed that it was His *glorification* that allowed Jesus to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and pour it out upon them.

We see here again the twofold work of God. The *resurrection* of Jesus made the way for believers to become spiritually regenerated and the *glorification* of Jesus made the way for the living waters of the Spirit to be poured out upon His church.

It is interesting to note that there is not an Old Testament Scripture that specifically says, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." Since "rock" was often used in the Old Testament as a symbolic reference to the Messiah and "water" was often a symbolic reference for the Holy Spirit, Jesus may have been referring to the typology of this event during Israel's wilderness journey, which Paul also referenced:

Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Exodus 17:6)

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. *For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.* (1 Corinthians 10:1-4; emphasis mine)

Furthermore, to take this typology even deeper, the 105th Psalm links *this specific event* to God's promise to Abraham, which the apostle Paul later clarified extended to us Gentiles:

He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river. *For he remembered his holy promise,* and Abraham, his servant. (41-42; emphasis mine)

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall the nations be blessed'" (Galatians 3:8).

Jesus was the rock that was struck on the cross. The Spirit would subsequently flow from Him and the body of Christ would drink and be filled.

## **Jesus' Earthly Life was our Model**

It is essential to recognize that the core purpose of Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit was to empower the church with the Holy Spirit so that His life can be made known through us. Jesus Himself was an example of this as the Father lived through Him. He explained to Philip:



“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that *I am in the Father and the Father is in me*? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but *the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me*, or else believe on account of the works themselves.” (John 14:9-11; emphasis mine)

We must remember that Jesus Himself did not begin to do the works of God until He was empowered with the Holy Spirit after being water baptized by John. He was born a man without sin—His (human) Spirit alive to God—but His ministry did not begin until the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and rested on him (Matthew 3:16). It was at this point, when the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him (Luke 4:18), that the Father would begin living through Him and why He could then make statements such as the following:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. *For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise*. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.” (John 5:19-20a; emphasis mine)

And what did Jesus tell His disciples about the baptism with the Holy Spirit? He said, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and *you will be my witnesses ...*” (Acts 1:8a; emphasis mine). Again, the purpose of the original baptism with the Holy Spirit was for the church to receive the Spiritual empowerment necessary to reveal the life of Christ in us.

## Preparation for Empowerment

On the night before Jesus went to the cross, He taught His disciples how the Spirit would soon function in their lives. He was preparing them for the empowerment of the Spirit. This is recorded in detail in chapters 14 to 17 of John’s gospel.

Jesus first emphasized that He was going to prepare a place for His disciples with the Father. He explained:

“In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” (John 14:2-3)

The English word translated here as “rooms” is the Greek word *mone*, a noun which means *a staying, abiding, dwelling, abode*. The only other time *mone* is used in the New Testament is a few paragraphs later when Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home [*mone*] with him” (14:23). Jesus was revealing the Spiritual union that

would be forged through His death and resurrection. *Mone* refers to a Spiritual place of abiding between God and man through Jesus Christ. This place is the "in Christ" that the apostle Paul referred to countless times in his letters to the churches.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the second person of the [triunity](#), is how God the Father reveals Himself to man, as John taught: "No one has ever seen God; the only God [the Son], who is at the Father's side, he has made him known" (John 1:18). Jesus Christ is where God meets man and through Him, man can live with God. This Greek noun *mone* comes from the Greek verb *meno*, which means *abide* and is translated as such in English seven times in the next chapter of John (15) where Jesus gave His disciples multiple exhortations to "abide" *in Him*. This abiding is where the real Christian life is, as John wrote: "*In him* was life, and the life was the light of men." (1:4; emphasis mine). Jesus' glorious mission would enable believers to live with the Father *immediately*. This life "in Christ" is available *now* and is what Jesus meant when He said, "where I am you may be also."

In Part 2 of this teaching we will examine how new believers are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ before they are empowered with the Holy Spirit. This baptism into the life of Christ is what Jesus went to prepare a place for.

A few paragraphs later, He explained this in more detail:

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home [*mone*] with him. (John 14:18-23)

On what *day* would the disciples know that (1) Jesus was in the Father, (2) they were in Him, and (3) He was in them? *They would know on Pentecost after they were empowered by the Holy Spirit*. When that day arrived they had watched Jesus' final ascent into heaven (Acts 1:9) ten days prior so they knew He was with the Father. After the Holy Spirit came upon them they would realize that Christ lived in them. Having just spent three years with Jesus, they would quickly recognize His character, manner, and voice. As Jesus lived in them, they would understand that they were in Him, especially as the Spirit reminded them of His teaching.

I was teaching this to my oldest two children a few months ago and my son, Judah, with a priceless look

on his face, asked me something like, “How can Jesus be with God and in me at the same time?” The answer is because God is a triunity. Since God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are *one*, a born again person is in the Father and the Father is in him—through Jesus Christ—because the Spirit baptized him into Jesus Christ when he first believed. This takes place because the Spirit unites with the newly cleansed spirit of the believer. The work of God through Jesus Christ and the operation of His triunity has given us life with Him now, as John wrote:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and *indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.* (1 John 1:1-3; emphasis mine)

The critical point here is this: the empowerment of the Holy Spirit illuminates this relationship. Believers that are not filled with the Spirit lack this realization.

We must not fail to see the love of God for us working through Christ here. Jesus said, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” An “orphan” is a child without a parent. Jesus saying, “in that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” was God revealing that He is our loving Father Who wants to be with us forever. Jesus’ passion to endure the cross reflected God’s desire to come to us, save us, and father us. Jesus’ work was the preparation for believers to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. The love of God overflows when we are empowered by the Spirit because it illuminates this fatherly relationship.

## **The Necessity of Obedience**

We can enjoy this loving relationship with the Father and be transformed by His Spirit, if we obey His commandments. John recorded Jesus teaching this to His disciples the following *six* times (*in italics*) in his gospel:

*"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

*"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.* And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, *"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.* And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.*

*"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." ...*

*"You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (John 14:15-27a; 15:10-11,14-15; emphasis mine)*

The fact that Jesus mentioned the connection between love and obedience six times is interesting to me because in [\\*Ask in His Name\\*](#) I uncovered how Jesus told the disciples six times throughout chapters 14 to 16 of John's gospel that if they ask Him for anything in His name, He would do it. Six is the number of man, which could be a subtle way of the Holy Spirit revealing the responsibility of man here.

For a rich understanding of these six times, here they are again succinctly:

- | If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (14:15)
- | Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. (14:21)
- | If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. (14:23)
- | Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. (14:24)
- | If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. (15:10)

- You are my friends if you do what I command you, (15:14)

Jesus *repeatedly* referred to this integral relationship between obeying His commandments and loving Him in order to prepare His followers to be vessels for the soon-coming Holy Spirit to make His life known through. Disobedience to the voice of God would stymie the life of Christ in His people, whereas a true love for Him—demonstrated by obedience—would cause His life to flourish in and through them.

This loving obedience is an important foundation for us because the Spirit has been poured out to empower us to live in Christ. If our actions are contrary to His nature, we will not be filled with His Spirit and the life of Christ will not be revealed. The groundwork that Jesus laid for the empowerment by the Holy Spirit was continued obedience to His commands. He led by example. I am reminded of Him telling the Pharisees: “And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, *for I always do the things that are pleasing to him*” (John 8:29; emphasis mine). The nature and power of God was continually revealed in His life because of His perfect obedience to the Father.

Obedience to the voice of God goes hand in hand with laying down our lives. All four gospels record Jesus as having consistently taught the unequivocal requirement of laying down one’s life to follow Him. In fact, if you subtract out the parallel passages, the gospels record him saying this the following ... you guessed it, *six* times:

1. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:39)

2. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. (Luke 9:24; parallels are Matthew 16:25 and Mark 8:35)

3. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yet, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26)

4. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. (Luke 17:33)

5. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:25)

6. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13).

Jesus also taught on this subject in other related ways such as when He told the twelve, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35b). Furthermore, in [Humility and Faith](#), I pointed out the *six* times that Jesus taught aspects of His “death to self” doctrine in chapters 14 to 16 of

the gospel of Luke alone.

## Jesus' Strategy for His Church

Amazingly, having completed all of these teachings, I now have documented Jesus emphasizing the following specific (paraphrased) teachings six times each:

- You must lose your own life (death to self) to find the life God has for you
- If you love Jesus you will do what He says
- Whatever you ask God in the person of Jesus, He will do it (Christ living through you)

When I consider that it is Jesus Who baptized His church with the Holy Spirit, I find this even more intriguing. Here I see Jesus at the head of His church *controlling* who is empowered with the Holy Spirit based upon His criteria. His strategy could not be more clear. We surrender our lives. We obey His voice. He lives through us. This is the life the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire was given to empower us for. For the obedient disciple, the Holy Spirit illuminates his life in Christ, guides and speaks to him, and empowers him so that he experiences the life of Jesus.

## Endnotes

1. This is an example of [The Law of Double Reference](#), one of the Biblical interpretation rules developed by Dr. David L. Cooper, the late founder and director of the Biblical Research Society. This law explains the situation where a portion of Scripture points to two different events or people that are separated by a long period of time, but they are blended together into a single picture.