

TRUTHSCAPE

BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

A Biblical and Patristic Analysis

Three Horizons · Tracing the Argument · Exegetical Synthesis

A Paper Presented to
The Elders of Reformed Baptist Church
by
Steve Crow
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Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

I. Introduction

The Problem

Contemporary Christian discourse often equates “baptism of the Spirit” with conversion, regeneration, or the moment of saving faith. This identification—widely assumed across many traditions—creates a theological framework in which water baptism becomes redundant, merely symbolic, or secondary to an interior “Spirit baptism” that constitutes the true moment of salvation.

Yet when one examines the New Testament (NT) texts in which “baptized with/in the Spirit” appears, a different picture emerges. The phrase occurs in a limited number of passages, always as a promise from Christ rather than a command to believers, and operates within specific redemptive-historical contexts rather than as a description of the mechanics of normative conversion.

Meanwhile, the NT repeatedly associates forgiveness, union with Christ, covenant entry, and salvific language with water baptism—a commanded, public, immediate act administered by humans in response to the gospel.

This disjunction between contemporary assumptions and apostolic usage raises critical questions:

- What does the New Testament actually mean by “baptism of the Spirit”?
- How does it differ from “receiving the Spirit,” “indwelling,” “sealing,” or “filling”?
- What act does apostolic preaching command as the proper response to the gospel?
- To which baptism does Scripture attach forgiveness, cleansing, and incorporation into Christ?

Thesis

This paper argues that the New Testament presents a coordinated pattern of salvation in which Spirit baptism, water baptism, Spirit indwelling, sealing, cleansing, and salvation language are distinct in emphasis yet organically integrated within the one saving work of God through Christ.

Spirit baptism denotes Christ's redemptive-historical pouring out of the Spirit. Water baptism is the apostolically commanded and enacted response to the gospel. Spirit indwelling is the ongoing presence of God in those who belong to Christ. Sealing is the Spirit as God's mark of ownership and pledge of inheritance. Cleansing language denotes covenant purification accomplished by God through Christ and the Spirit. Salvation language brings these categories together without erasing their distinctions.

Scope and Method

The primary method used here is the Three Horizons approach, as summarized by Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum in *Kingdom through Covenant*, chapter 3. They argue that biblical interpretation must proceed through the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons.¹

To this, we add Thomas Schreiner's exegetical method for tracing the argument. Schreiner argues that the most important step in exegesis is to identify the main proposition, determine how subordinate clauses function, and show how the whole passage hangs together.²

Methodological Note: Three Levels of Argument

Throughout this paper, it is essential to distinguish among three levels of argument:

- 1. What the text explicitly says**—the passage's actual words and grammar
- 2. What the text strongly implies**—conclusions that follow from its logic and context
- 3. What later theology infers**—conclusions drawn by combining texts with external frameworks

For example, Acts 2:38 explicitly commands repentance and baptism and promises the Spirit. It strongly implies that baptism cannot be treated as mere optional symbolism. Defining Spirit baptism as the inward, real baptism that replaces water baptism is a later theological inference.

¹Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), chap. 3.

²Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), chap. 6.

Structure of the Paper

- Section II clarifies New Testament terminology regarding the Spirit
- Sections III–IV define what Spirit baptism is and is not
- Section V traces the apostolic pattern across Acts
- Section VI examines key contested texts with detailed exegesis
- Section VII provides patristic confirmation
- Sections VIII–IX trace the historical development from Zwingli to modern Reformed theology
- Sections X–XI offer direct refutation and engagement with counterarguments
- Section XII concludes with implications
- Appendices provide formal scriptural tracing following Schreiner’s method

II. Terminological Clarification

The NT uses several distinct phrases about the Spirit’s relationship to believers, and these phrases are not interchangeable.

Methodological control: A theological conclusion may identify only two categories as equivalent if the text explicitly equates them or if the context demands that equivalence.

Term	Agent	Frequency	Commanded?	Function
Baptized with Spirit	Christ	Limited (epochal)	No	Attestation, bestowal
Receive the Spirit	God (giver)	Universal (promised)	No (promised)	Gift of new covenant life
Indwelling	Spirit	Continuous	N/A (state)	Ongoing presence
Sealed	God	Once	No	Ownership, security
Filled	Spirit	Repeatable	Yes (Eph 5:18)	Empowerment, holiness

Table 1. Spirit Terminological Clarification

A. “Baptized with the Holy Spirit” (βαπτίζω ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ)

Occurrences:

- Matthew 3:11 / Mark 1:8 / Luke 3:16 / John 1:33—John the Baptist’s prophecy
- Acts 1:5—Jesus’ promise before ascension

- Acts 11:16—Peter’s retrospective interpretation of the Cornelius event

Characteristics:

- Always promised by Jesus or prophesied by John
- Never commanded of believers
- Christ is always the agent (“He will baptize you”)
- Occurs at specific redemptive-historical moments

B. “Receive the Holy Spirit” (λαμβάνω τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον)

Occurrences:

- Acts 2:38—promised to those who repent and are baptized
- Acts 8:15, 17, 19—Samaritans receive through apostolic hands
- Acts 10:47—Gentiles received before water baptism (exceptional)
- Acts 19:2—Paul asks if the Ephesian disciples received

Characteristics:

- Gift language—something given by God
- Connected to obedience (repentance, baptism) in normative cases
- Timing varies (immediate, delayed, exceptional)

C. “Indwelling of the Spirit”

Key texts: Romans 8:9, 11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 2 Timothy 1:14

- Describes the Spirit’s ongoing presence in believers
- Presupposes prior reception
- Not described as a distinct event but as a continuing state

D. “Sealed with the Spirit” (σφραγίζω)

Key texts: Ephesians 1:13–14; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22

- Occurs at the point of believing
- Marks ownership and guarantees inheritance
- Divine action, not human achievement

E. “Filled with the Spirit” (πίμπλημι / πληρώω)

Key texts: Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; Ephesians 5:18

- The only Spirit-language that is commanded (Eph 5:18)
- Repeatable experience for empowerment
- Not identical with the initial reception or baptism

III. What “Baptism of the Spirit” IS (Biblically Defined)

1. A Promise Announced by Jesus, Not a Command Performed by Humans

The phrase “baptized with the Holy Spirit” appears in the Gospels as John the Baptist’s prophecy about Jesus’ superior ministry and in Acts as Jesus’ promise to the apostles. In no case is it presented as something believers are commanded to seek or to perform.

Acts 1:5 is crucial: Jesus tells the apostles, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” This is *promise language*, not *command language*.³

2. A Divine Act at Decisive Covenantal Moments

The two clear narrative fulfillments of the Spirit-baptism language in Acts are Pentecost (Acts 2) and Cornelius (Acts 10–11). Peter explicitly connects Cornelius to Jesus’ promise of Spirit baptism in Acts 11:16. Both events are epochal—they mark the incorporation of major people groups (Jews and Gentiles) into the new-covenant community.⁴

Pentecost’s Fourfold Character:

- 1. Public and evidentiary.** The event is accompanied by audible and visible phenomena (wind, fire, and tongues).
- 2. Corporate and epochal.** This inaugurates the apostolic community’s empowered witness.
- 3. Mission-directed.** The multilingual proclamation anticipates the gospel’s outward movement toward all nations.

³Acts 2:33 shows that the Spirit outpouring is explicitly tied to the exalted Christ.

⁴Acts 11:16 is especially important because Peter himself interprets Cornelius’s outpouring through Jesus’ promise.

- 4. Not identical to water baptism.** The disciples are not being commanded to undergo water baptism; God is acting directly upon them.

3. A Sign-Act for Redemptive-Historical Transition

Spirit baptism serves as divine attestation at crucial junctures in the unfolding of salvation history. It is not presented as the ordinary mechanics of individual conversion, but as Christ's sovereign act that marks covenant fulfillment.

The epochal character of Spirit baptism explains why the phrase is rare. It does not describe what happens to every convert; it describes what Christ did at Pentecost and at the Gentile Pentecost (Cornelius). These are unrepeatable, redemptive-historical events.

IV. What “Baptism of the Spirit” IS NOT

1. NOT the New Covenant Entry Point

No apostolic sermon ever says, “Repent and be Spirit-baptized for forgiveness.”

Entry language is tied to repentance and water baptism. Acts 2:38: “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.”

The command is repentance and water baptism. Spirit reception is promised as God's gift, not commanded as the act of entry.

2. NOT a Replacement for Water Baptism

In Acts 10, the Spirit falls → Peter immediately commands water baptism. If Spirit baptism were sufficient, Acts 10:48 would be incoherent. Peter's response proves the opposite: an extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit does not cancel the necessity of water baptism.

This is one of the most decisive texts in the entire discussion. The exceptional nature of the Cornelius event—Spirit falling before baptism—does not lead Peter to conclude that baptism is unnecessary. Instead, it leads him to conclude that baptism cannot be refused.

3. NOT Synonymous with Regeneration or Forgiveness

Scripture attaches cleansing, remission, and union with Christ to water baptism:

- Acts 22:16—“Be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name”
- Romans 6:3–4—Baptism into Christ's death and resurrection
- 1 Peter 3:21—“Baptism now saves you”
- Galatians 3:27—“As many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”
- Colossians 2:12—“Buried with him in baptism... raised with him through faith”

None of these texts use Spirit baptism language. The salvific-incorporative force is attached to water baptism, not to a separate Spirit baptism.

4. NOT a Universal, Repeatable Experience

The language of Spirit baptism in Acts is tied to unrepeatable redemptive-historical moments. Spirit filling, by contrast, is repeatable (Acts 4:31) and even commanded (Eph 5:18). These categories must not be conflated.

The repeatability test is significant: if “Spirit baptism” were identical with conversion, it would be a one-time event for each believer. But the texts that use Spirit-baptism language do not describe individual conversion events; they describe Christ’s corporate action at epochal moments.

V. The Apostolic Pattern: Acts–Wide Sequencing Analysis

A. Master Flow (Normative Pattern)

Gospel Proclaimed → Hearing with Faith → Repentance → Water Baptism → Spirit Reception

Key observation: The variable element in Acts is the timing of Spirit manifestation; the fixed element is the command and administration of water baptism.

B. Acts Case Studies

1. Jerusalem — Acts 2:14–41 (Jews)

Context: Pentecost; the Spirit has just fallen on the apostles; Peter preaches.

Sequence: Gospel preached → Conviction (“cut to the heart”) → “Repent and be baptized” → Spirit promised.

Result: ~3,000 baptized that day.

Observation: The apostolic command is repentance and baptism; Spirit-reception is promised, not commanded.

2. Samaria — Acts 8:12–17 (Samaritans)

Context: Philip preaches in Samaria; many believe and are baptized.

Sequence: Gospel preached → Belief → Water baptism → Spirit delayed until apostles arrive.

Result: Spirit given through apostolic laying on of hands.

Observation: Exceptional delay for redemptive-historical reasons (Samaritan inclusion required apostolic verification). Baptism is not deferred; Spirit is.

3. Caesarea — Acts 10:44–48 (Gentiles)

Context: Peter preaches to Cornelius’s household; the Spirit falls during the sermon.

Sequence: Gospel preached → Spirit falls during preaching → Water baptism commanded immediately

Result: Peter commands baptism: “Can anyone withhold water...?”

Observation: Exceptional order for redemptive-historical reasons (Gentile inclusion required divine attestation first). Spirit-reception does not cancel baptism; it confirms its necessity.

4. Ephesus — Acts 19:1–7 (Disciples of John)

Context: Paul encounters disciples who know only John’s baptism.

Sequence: Discovery of incomplete baptism → Instruction → Baptism in Jesus’ name → Spirit through laying on of hands.

Result: They speak in tongues and prophesy.

Observation: John’s baptism is inadequate once Christ has come and the Spirit has been poured out. Christian baptism completes what was lacking.

C. Synthesis Table

Group	Water Baptism	Spirit Reception	Order Preserved?
Jews (Acts 2)	Yes—commanded	After (promised)	Yes
Samaritans (Acts 8)	Yes—administered	After (delayed)	Yes
Gentiles (Acts 10)	Yes—commanded	Before (exceptional)	Yes (corrected immediately)
Ephesians (Acts 19)	Yes—administered	After	Yes

Table 2. Water Baptism/Spirit Reception Synthesis

D. Apostolic Rule Derived from the Data

The apostles never preach Spirit baptism as the gospel response. They preach repentance and water baptism. Spirit reception is God’s gift, given in his time and manner. When the Spirit comes first (Cornelius), water baptism is immediately commanded. When water baptism occurs first (the normal pattern), the Spirit follows.

Bottom-Line Claim: In Acts, the constant is the command to be baptized in water; the variable is the Spirit’s timing. This inverts the modern evangelical assumption that Spirit baptism is the constant and water baptism is optional.

VI. Addressing Key Texts

A. 1 Corinthians 12:13 — “In One Spirit We Were All Baptized”

The Text

“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.” (1 Cor 12:13)

Acknowledging the Difficulty

This verse is the most serious text cited against the distinction argued in this paper. It is frequently cited as decisive proof that Spirit baptism is the universal conversion experience by which all believers are incorporated into Christ’s body. The argument runs: Paul says we were all baptized in/by one Spirit into one body; therefore, Spirit baptism is not limited to special occasions but is the normative act of incorporation for every believer.

This reading warrants in-depth engagement. The phrase ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν is often read instrumentally: “by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” Even if one rejects that reading, it remains a serious grammatical option.

Examination

1. The Grammatical Question

The phrase “in one Spirit” (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι) can be understood as:

- Instrumental (“by one Spirit”)—the Spirit as agent performing the baptism
- Locative/Spherical (“in one Spirit”)—the Spirit as the realm or element in which baptism occurs
- Attendant circumstance—baptism accompanied by the Spirit’s presence

The grammar alone does not definitively resolve this question. Competent exegetes have defended each option.

2. Pauline Baptism Language Elsewhere

When Paul speaks of baptism as the incorporation act, he uses language that assumes the baptism the churches actually administer:

- Romans 6:3–4: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death...”
- Galatians 3:27: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
- Colossians 2:12: “...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith...”

In each of these texts, “baptized into Christ” is incorporation language, and the assumed act is the baptism that churches administer. Paul elsewhere does not distinguish a separate “Spirit baptism” from this act.

3. The Context of 1 Corinthians 12

Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 12 centers on unity amid diversity. The Corinthians are divided over spiritual gifts; Paul reminds them that despite their different gifts, they share one Spirit, one Lord, one God, one body, and one baptism into that body.

The rhetorical point is not to define conversion mechanics but to ground unity in shared experience. What shared baptismal experience would the Corinthians recognize? The baptism they all underwent upon entering the community.

4. “Made to Drink of One Spirit”

The second clause—“all were made to drink of one Spirit”—uses different imagery (drinking vs. immersion). This likely refers to the reception or indwelling of the Spirit that accompanies or follows baptism, not to a second baptism. Together, the two clauses describe the full initiation: baptized into the body and given the Spirit to drink.

5. What the Text Does and Does Not Establish

Even granting the instrumental reading, the verse does not, by itself, prove that “Spirit baptism” is a distinct inward event that supplants water baptism. At a minimum, Paul describes incorporation into the one body in inseparable connection with the one Spirit. Whether the preposition is taken instrumentally or locatively, the text still does not establish the later theological claim that water baptism is merely symbolic or extrinsic to incorporation.

Conclusion: 1 Corinthians 12:13 is a difficult text for the position argued here, but it does not overturn that position. The verse does not establish “Spirit baptism” as a category distinct from the baptism Paul elsewhere assumes and describes. At most, it describes the baptism shared by all believers—the same baptism Paul elsewhere connects to water, burial, and rising with Christ—as occurring within the Spirit’s unifying work. The text does not support the conclusion that water baptism is merely symbolic or that a separate Spirit baptism replaces it.

B. John 3:5 — “Born of Water and Spirit”

The Text

“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’” (John 3:5)

Interpretive Options

Several interpretations have been proposed for “water” in this passage:

1. Physical birth—“water” refers to amniotic fluid; Jesus contrasts natural birth with spiritual rebirth

2. Water baptism—“water” refers to the baptism Jesus’ disciples were already practicing (John 3:22; 4:1–2)
3. Old Testament cleansing imagery—“water” evokes prophetic promises of eschatological cleansing (Ezek 36:25–27)
4. Unified water-and-Spirit event—a single new birth described with two aspects

Examination

1. The Physical Birth Interpretation

This reading takes “born of water” to mean natural birth and “born of Spirit” to mean spiritual rebirth. Jesus would be saying: You’ve had physical birth; now you need spiritual birth.

Problems with this reading: The Greek construction (ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος) reads most naturally as a unified pair rather than as a contrast. Jesus’ response to Nicodemus’ confusion about physical rebirth (v. 4) does not reinforce a flesh/spirit dichotomy at v. 5; instead, that distinction appears in v. 6. This reading is virtually absent from patristic interpretation.

2. The Water Baptism Interpretation

This reading takes “water” to refer to baptism, which Jesus’ disciples practiced even during his ministry (John 3:22; 4:1–2). Jesus tells Nicodemus that entry into the kingdom requires being born of water (baptism) and of the Spirit.

Support for this reading: The immediate context includes a reference to baptism (John 3:22–26). The earliest patristic interpreters consistently understood “water” to refer to baptism. This aligns with the apostolic preaching pattern (repent → be baptized → receive the Spirit).

3. The Ezekiel 36 Background

Ezekiel 36:25–27 promises:⁵

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses... And I will put my Spirit within you...”

⁵The background of John 3:5 is best sought in Ezekiel 36:25–27. Jesus expects Nicodemus to have understood these things already (John 3:10).

This reading interprets “water and Spirit” as an allusion to the new covenant’s eschatological cleansing and Spirit-indwelling promise. Nicodemus, as a “teacher of Israel” (v. 10), should have recognized this.

Support: Jesus chides Nicodemus for not understanding “these things” (v. 10)—suggesting an Old Testament background. The pairing of water and Spirit appears in Ezekiel’s New Covenant promise. This reading does not exclude baptism but grounds it in prophetic expectation.

4. Synthesis

These interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Taken together, the immediate context, the Ezekiel 36 background, and early Christian reception make a baptismally informed reading of “water and Spirit” highly plausible. At a minimum, the verse does not support separating Spirit birth from covenantal cleansing, as many modern symbolic readings do.

The text does not support reading “water” as merely symbolic or optional. Nor does it support separating Spirit birth from water birth into two distinct events, one essential and one dispensable.

Conclusion: John 3:5 presents birth “of water and Spirit” as a unified entry into the kingdom. The immediate context, patristic reception, and Old Testament background make the baptismal reading highly plausible, though the text remains genuinely disputed. What the text clearly does not support is the separation of Spirit birth from water-and-Spirit cleansing that characterizes many modern symbolic readings.

C. Titus 3:5 — “Washing of Regeneration and Renewal of the Holy Spirit”

The Text

“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” (Titus 3:5–6)

Key Terms

- λουτρόν (loutron)—“washing” or “bath”; used in Ephesians 5:26 (“the washing of water with the word”) in an explicitly baptismal context

- παλιγγενεσία (palingenesia)—“regeneration” or “new birth”; used only here and Matthew 19:28 in the NT
- ἀνακαίνωσις (anakainōsis)—“renewal”; also used in Romans 12:2

Examination

1. What Is the “Washing”?

The term λουτρόν means a bath or washing. In Ephesians 5:26, Christ cleanses the church “by the washing of water with the word”—a clear baptismal reference. In Titus 3:5, the most natural referent is likewise baptism.⁶

The dominant early Christian reading interprets the “washing” baptismally, not as a purely inward event detached from the rite.

2. Grammatical Structure: One Event or Two?

The phrase “washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου) can be parsed as either two aspects of one event (the washing that regenerates and the renewal brought by the Spirit) or as a single washing characterized by two things (regeneration and Spirit-renewal).

Either way, the “washing” is the instrumental means (διὰ + genitive) through which salvation is applied. The Spirit’s renewal is not separate from the washing but connected to it.

3. Coherence with the Apostolic Pattern

Titus 3:5 fits coherently with Acts 2:38:

Acts 2:38	Titus 3:5
Be baptized	Washing
For forgiveness of sins	Of regeneration
Receive the Holy Spirit	Renewal of the Holy Spirit

Table 3. Apostolic Pattern Regeneration

The sequence and connection are preserved: washing (baptism) is the occasion for regeneration and reception of the Spirit.

⁶The term λουτρόν refers to a bath or washing. The ‘washing’ is the instrumental means (διὰ + genitive) by which salvation is applied.

4. What This Text Does Not Say

The text does not say: “Saved by Spirit baptism apart from washing”; “Saved by faith, then symbolically washed”; or “The washing is merely outward; the Spirit’s work is the real salvation.”

The text explicitly ties salvation to the washing as the instrumental means, with the Spirit's renewal accompanying the washing.

Conclusion: Titus 3:5 presents baptism (“washing”) as the instrumental means by which God applies regeneration and the Spirit’s renewal. This aligns with the apostolic pattern in Acts and offers no support for separating Spirit-work from the commanded water rite.

D. Romans 8:9 — “Anyone Who Does Not Have the Spirit Does Not Belong to Him”

The Text

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” (Rom 8:9)

The Argument Often Made

This verse is cited to argue that all true believers have the Spirit; that having the Spirit makes one a Christian; and therefore that Spirit baptism (= receiving the Spirit) marks the moment of conversion.

Examination

1. What Category Is Paul Using?

Paul speaks of “having” or “dwelling”—indwelling language. This is not “baptized with the Spirit” language. The terminological distinction is important.

- “Baptized with the Spirit”—Christ’s act, limited occurrences, epochal
- “Have the Spirit” / “Spirit dwells in you”—ongoing state of all believers

Romans 8:9 describes the latter, not the former.

2. When Does One Come to “Have” the Spirit?

Paul does not specify in this verse when or how one comes to have the Spirit. He simply states that having the Spirit is the mark of belonging to Christ.

But elsewhere, Paul links Spirit-reception to baptism:

- 1 Corinthians 12:13—baptized into one body, made to drink of one Spirit
- Galatians 3:27 and 3:2–5—baptized into Christ; received the Spirit by hearing with faith
- Titus 3:5—saved through washing and renewal of the Spirit

The “having” Paul describes in Romans 8:9 is the ongoing result of what was received at initiation—initiation that Paul elsewhere associates with baptism.

3. How Does Acts 8 Relate?

In Acts 8:12–17, the Samaritans believed and were baptized but had not yet received the Holy Spirit. The Spirit came later through the apostles’ hands.

Does this mean they “did not belong to Christ” before the Spirit came?

The text does not frame it that way. The delay was for redemptive-historical reasons (apostolic authentication of the inclusion of the Samaritans), not because their faith or baptism was deficient. The full pattern was completed when the Spirit was given.

Romans 8:9 describes the normative, completed state of believers, not the mechanics by which one arrives there.

Conclusion: Romans 8:9 affirms that all who belong to Christ have the Spirit. It does not define “Spirit baptism” as the conversion moment, nor does it separate Spirit-indwelling from the initiatory complex that Paul assumes elsewhere. The text describes the normative completed state of believers without specifying the full sequence by which one arrives there.

E. Ephesians 1:13–14 — “Sealed with the Promised Holy Spirit”

The Text

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of

our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” (Eph 1:13–14)

The Argument Often Made

This text is cited to argue that believers are sealed with the Spirit when they believe; therefore, Spirit reception occurs at the moment of faith, prior to or apart from baptism.

Examination

1. What Is “Sealing”?

Sealing (σφραγίζω) is language of ownership and authenticity. A seal marks something as belonging to someone and guarantees its security. The Spirit is the “seal” and “guarantee” (ἀρραβών, a down payment) of the future inheritance.

2. When Does Sealing Occur?

The text says believers were sealed “when you heard... and believed” (ἀκούσαντες... πιστεύσαντες). The participles are in the aorist, indicating action viewed as a whole, either contemporaneous with or logically connected to the sealing.

But this does not exclude baptism from the initiation process. Paul is describing the believers’ experience of coming to faith, not providing a technical timeline that would exclude baptism.

In the same letter, Paul says:

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.” (Eph 5:25–26)

Here, Paul explicitly includes baptism (“washing of water”) as part of Christ’s saving work for the church. Ephesians does not set faith and baptism in opposition.

3. “Sealing” Is Not “Spirit Baptism”

Ephesians never uses the phrase “baptized with the Spirit.” The sealing of the Spirit is a distinct category:

- Sealing = ownership, security, guarantee
- Spirit baptism = Christ’s sovereign action at epochal moments

These are not synonyms. Using Ephesians 1:13 to define “Spirit baptism” imports a category the text does not employ.

4. Coherence with Pauline Teaching

Ephesians 4:4–6 lists the unities of the faith:

“There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”

The “one baptism” Paul cites is the baptism shared and practiced by the churches—water baptism into Christ. Through this baptism, believers enter the “one body” and receive the “one Spirit.”

Conclusion: Ephesians 1:13–14 describes the Spirit as the seal and guarantee given to believers. It neither establishes Spirit baptism as a separate category replacing baptism nor excludes baptism from the initiation complex attested elsewhere in apostolic preaching and practice.

VII. Patristic Confirmation Table (Acts → Early Church Fathers)

A. Methodological Controls

- Sources limited to 1st–3rd century witnesses
- Priority given to catechetical, pastoral, and baptismal texts
- No later Augustinian or medieval sacramental development
- Question tested: What act did the Fathers say remits sins, incorporates into Christ, and confers new life?

B. Consolidated Witness Table

Father	Date	What Effects Forgiveness/New Birth?	Role of the Holy Spirit	Alignment with Acts
Justin Martyr	c. 150	Water baptism “for remission of sins”	Spirit given to the baptized	Acts 2:38
Irenaeus of Lyons	c. 180	Washing of regeneration	Spirit vivifies those reborn	Acts 2 / Rom 6

Father	Date	What Effects Forgiveness/New Birth?	Role of the Holy Spirit	Alignment with Acts
Tertullian	c. 200	Sins washed in baptism; flesh washed that the soul may be cleansed	Spirit follows washing	Acts / Titus 3:5
Hippolytus	c. 215	Baptism grants remission	Post-baptism anointing	Acts 8:14–17
Cyprian	c. 250	No forgiveness outside baptism	Spirit received after washing	Acts 2:38
Clement of Alex.	c. 200	Illumination at baptism	Spirit seals believers	Eph 1:13

Table 4. Patristic Witness of the Role of the Holy Spirit

C. Representative Quotations

Justin Martyr (c. 150): “Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water... that we may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed.”⁷

Tertullian (c. 200): “When we have entered the water and made profession of the Christian faith in the words prescribed by its law, we are received, and immediately the Holy Spirit takes possession of us. The flesh is washed that the soul may be made clean.”⁸

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 350): “Great indeed is the baptism offered you. It is ransom to captives; remission of sins; death of sin; regeneration of the soul; garment of light; holy seal indissoluble; chariot to heaven; luxury of paradise; a welcome into the kingdom.”⁹

Augustine (c. 400): “It is not their sinlessness, but baptism, which brought these infants into the kingdom of Christ.”¹⁰

⁷Justin Martyr, “The First Apology of Justin,” 61, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Roberts and Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans reprint, 1979), 1:183.

⁸Tertullian, “On Baptism,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans reprint, 1978), 3:669.

⁹Cyril of Jerusalem, “Procatechesis,” trans. Gifford, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans reprint, 1978), 16:5.

¹⁰Augustine, “A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins,” 1:34, in *The Works of Aurelius Augustine* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872), 35.

D. What Is Meaningfully Absent

No patristic text teaches that “Spirit baptism” is the moment of forgiveness, while water baptism is merely symbolic. No catechetical instruction tells converts to seek Spirit baptism as the act of conversion. No early Christian writer distinguishes an invisible Spirit baptism from a merely symbolic water baptism.

This silence is historically significant. The earliest Christians did not teach what much of modern evangelicalism assumes.

E. Why This Matters

If modern Reformed and Protestant theology says, “Spirit baptism regenerates” and “Water baptism is only a symbol,” then it must explain why:

- The apostles never taught this
- The earliest Christians never taught this
- The catechetical practice of the first three centuries contradicts it

Historically, such a theology has no clear patristic pedigree. It is not an ancient Christian conviction; it is a later theological development whose origins can be traced to a specific moment in Church history.¹¹

VIII. The Reformation Rupture: How Zwingli and Calvin Changed Fifteen Centuries of Baptismal Theology

A. The Fifteen-Century Consensus

From the apostolic era through the medieval period, the Christian church maintained a consistent teaching: water baptism is the locus where God acts to forgive sins, unite believers to Christ, and grant the gift of the Spirit. This was not merely Roman Catholic doctrine; it was the universal conviction of Christendom.

¹¹Jack Cottrell, “The Biblical Consensus,” in *Baptism and the Remission of Sins*, ed. David Fletcher (Joplin: College Press, 1990), 28–32.

Thomas Aquinas summarized the medieval consensus: baptism is the sacrament of regeneration, the instrumental cause through which saving grace is conferred.¹²

Even Martin Luther, despite his break with Rome over justification, retained baptismal regeneration. In the Large Catechism, he wrote: “Baptism is not simply common water, but water comprehended in God’s Word and command... It effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation.”¹³

Key observation: Luther reformed the doctrine of justification but did not move the moment of salvation away from baptism. The innovation came from Zürich, not Wittenberg.

B. Zwingli’s Innovation

Huldrych Zwingli, the reformer of Zürich, made a decisive break. In his 1525 treatise “On Baptism,” he declared: “All the doctors have been in error from the time of the apostles... In this matter of baptism—if I may be pardoned for saying it—I can only conclude that all the doctors have been in error from the time of the apostles.”¹⁴

This is an astonishing admission. Zwingli knew he was innovating and that the church had never taught what he was about to teach. He proceeded anyway.

The Three Theological Drivers

Mark Moore identifies three interlocking convictions that drove Zwingli’s reconstruction:¹⁵

- 1. First, absolute divine sovereignty.** Zwingli held that God’s electing will is the sole cause of salvation. Nothing external can condition or mediate that election.
- 2. Second, salvation by election alone.** If election is the decisive factor, baptism cannot be. Baptism must be redefined as a human response to prior salvation, not as a divine means of granting it.

¹²Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 2 (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947–1948), 68:1, p. 2398.

¹³Martin Luther, “The Large Catechism,” IV:41–42, in *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 441–442.

¹⁴Huldrych Zwingli, “On Baptism,” in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 24 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 130.

¹⁵Mark Moore, “Zwingli on Baptism: His Incipient Philosophical Dualism” (unpublished paper, 1999), 4–5.

- 3. Third, incipient philosophical dualism.** Zwingli developed a sharp dichotomy between spirit and matter. Physical acts cannot affect spiritual realities. Water is material; salvation is spiritual. Therefore, water cannot save.

Zwingli wrote: “No material thing can purge the conscience. The Spirit alone can do that.” This dualism separates what the NT consistently unites.¹⁶

Evolving Definitions

Zwingli’s definition of baptism evolved over time. Initially, he described baptism as “a mark or pledge by which the one who receives it is reminded of the grace already received.” Later, he emphasized baptism as the believer’s pledge of allegiance to the community. By the end of his career, baptism had become primarily a covenant sign identifying children of believers with the visible community—a sign that signifies but does not effect.¹⁷

C. The Anabaptist Controversy

Zwingli faced a two-front war. Against Rome, he denied that baptism is a means of grace. Against the Anabaptists, he defended infant baptism—but now on covenantal rather than on regenerative grounds.

The Anabaptists pressed Zwingli’s logic: if baptism is merely a pledge of prior faith, only believers should be baptized. Zwingli responded by developing a covenant theology that justified infant baptism as a covenant sign analogous to circumcision, while still denying that baptism effects regeneration. The Zürich death penalty for rebaptism followed.¹⁸

D. Calvin’s Modification

John Calvin adopted much of Zwingli’s framework while softening some of its sharpest edges. In the Institutes, Calvin defined baptism as “a sign and seal” of God’s covenant promises. Baptism is not the moment of regeneration; it is the sign that confirms and seals what God has done or will do apart from the rite itself.¹⁹

¹⁶Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion* (Durham: Labyrinth Press, reprint 1981), 182.

¹⁷W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 214.

¹⁸Zwingli, “Refutation of Baptist Tricks,” in *Ulrich Zwingli: Selected Works* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1901), 179–180.

¹⁹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, Book 4, Chapter 15, Sections 1–4.

Calvin’s formulation was more sacramentally generous than Zwingli’s—he affirmed that God works through the sacraments—but it still shifted the decisive moment of salvation away from the baptismal act itself.

The Westminster Confession (1646) codified this trajectory: “Grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto [baptism] as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.” Baptism is downgraded from an instrumental cause to a confirmatory sign.²⁰

E. Comparison Table

Category	Apostolic	Augustine	Zwingli	Calvin
When does regeneration occur?	At baptism, through faith (Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5)	At baptism	Before baptism (by election)	Before or apart from baptism
Relation to baptism?	Baptism unites to Christ (Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27)	Baptism causes regeneration	Baptism symbolizes prior regeneration	Baptism seals what God has done/will do
Means of regeneration?	Washing of water and Spirit (John 3:5; Titus 3:5)	Water and Spirit together	Spirit alone, inwardly	Spirit through Word, confirmed by sign
Baptismal efficacy?	Instrumental—forgives, cleanses, incorporates	Instrumental (ex opere operato with faith)	None (signum nudum)	Confirmatory (sealing, not causing)

Table 5. Baptism Comparison

F. The Historical Irony

Karl Barth observed that Zwingli “stood alone” among the Reformers for his radical rejection of baptismal efficacy. The “sign and seal” view that now dominates much of Protestantism was the innovation, not the ancient consensus. What seems traditional to modern evangelicals is, in fact, the newcomer.²¹

The question this history raises: If the apostolic, patristic, and medieval churches, along with Luther, all affirmed baptismal regeneration, and if Zwingli himself admitted he was contradicting “all the doctors from the time of the apostles,” then on what exegetical basis can the Zwinglian view claim apostolic authority?

²⁰Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), ch. 28, §5.

²¹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975–77), IV/4, 128.

IX. From Water to Spirit: The Relocation of Salvation in Reformed Theology

A. The Necessary Relocation

Once Zwingli denied that baptism is the instrumental means of regeneration, a question necessarily arose: if not baptism, when and how does regeneration occur?

The answer that emerged in the Reformed tradition was this: regeneration is an invisible, prior, interior divine act. It occurs in the secret counsel of God and is applied by the Spirit, apart from and logically prior to any external rite. The Spirit does invisibly and inwardly what the apostles said happened in water baptism.

B. The Development of the *Ordo Salutis*

Reformed scholasticism developed an elaborate “order of salvation” (*ordo salutis*) to describe the logical sequence of divine acts in the application of redemption:²²

Election → Calling → Regeneration → Faith → Repentance → Justification → Sanctification → Glorification

The critical move: regeneration precedes faith. Louis Berkhof articulates the classic Reformed position: “Regeneration is a secret act of God in which man does not participate... Regeneration logically precedes faith.”²³

Observe the theological relocation: What the apostles said occurs “in baptism” (Rom 6:3–4; Col 2:12) or “through the washing of regeneration” (Titus 3:5) is now attributed to an invisible monergistic act that precedes all human response.

C. Spirit Baptism Redefined

In the NT, “baptism with the Holy Spirit” refers to Christ’s redemptive-historical outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and at Cornelius—epochal acts of covenant inauguration.

But in the developed Reformed and evangelical tradition, “Spirit baptism” is often redefined as equivalent to the invisible moment of regeneration. Every believer, it is

²²Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), s.v. “*ordo salutis*.”

²³Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 415–425.

said, is “Spirit baptized” at the moment of conversion—meaning that every believer undergoes an invisible spiritual baptism that constitutes the true baptism, with water baptism merely the outward sign.

R. C. Sproul articulates this view: “The baptism of the Holy Spirit refers to the Spirit’s work of uniting us to Christ... This is the real baptism; water baptism is the sign.”²⁴

This is a complete category inversion. The NT never uses the language of Spirit baptism in this way. The texts that use “baptized with the Spirit” (Matt 3:11; Acts 1:5; 11:16) refer to Christ’s singular redemptive-historical acts, not to the normative experience of every believer.

D. The Modern Reformed Baptist and Evangelical Synthesis

The Westminster Larger Catechism teaches that regeneration is wrought by the Word and Spirit, not by baptism. Later, Baptist theology adopted this framework while rejecting infant baptism. The result is a position common in contemporary evangelical and Reformed Baptist contexts:²⁵

Category	Apostolic Pattern	Reformed Baptist Pattern
When does regeneration occur?	At baptism, through faith (John 3:5; Titus 3:5)	Before faith, by sovereign Spirit act
What does baptism do?	Forgives sins, unites to Christ, grants Spirit	Symbolizes prior salvation; testifies publicly
What is 'Spirit baptism'?	Christ's redemptive-historical act (Acts 1:5; 11:16)	Equivalent to regeneration/conversion
Sequence?	Hear → Believe → Repent → Baptize → Receive Spirit	Regeneration → Faith → Repentance → Baptism
Is baptism necessary?	Yes—commanded (Acts 2:38; 22:16)	No—salvation complete before baptism

Table 6. Apostolic vs. Reformed Baptist Regeneration Pattern

Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology exemplifies this position: “Baptism is not necessary for regeneration or salvation... Baptism is a symbol that represents the beginning of the Christian life.”²⁶

²⁴R. C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 185–190.

²⁵Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), ch. 10, §1–2.

²⁶Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 699–706.

E. The Exegetical Burden

The Reformed reading must explain why the New Testament consistently associates saving language with water baptism if water baptism is merely symbolic:

- Acts 2:38: “Be baptized... for the forgiveness of your sins.
- Acts 22:16: “Be baptized and wash away your sins.”
- Romans 6:3–4: “All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.”
- Galatians 3:27: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
- Colossians 2:12: “Buried with him in baptism... raised with him through faith.”
- Titus 3:5: “He saved us... by the washing of regeneration.”
- 1 Peter 3:21: “Baptism... now saves you.”

The Reformed reading imports a distinction between an invisible prior transaction and a subsequent visible testimony, a distinction these texts do not contain. The texts speak of one coordinated event, not two separate events.²⁷

F. The Historical Irony Revisited

Zwingli sought to protect divine sovereignty from any human contribution. The irony is that his reconstruction shifts salvation from an objective, visible act (in which God promises to meet the believer) to a subjective, invisible experience (in which the believer must discern whether regeneration has occurred). Luther retained baptismal regeneration precisely because it grounded assurance in God's objective promise rather than in the believer's subjective perception.²⁸

The innovation is not baptismal regeneration. The innovation is the denial of baptismal regeneration. And that innovation—whatever its merits or demerits—cannot claim the authority of apostolic precedent or patristic consensus.²⁹

²⁷G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 263–275.

²⁸Cottrell, “The Biblical Consensus,” 31–32.

²⁹Moore, “Zwingli on Baptism,” 15.

X. Direct Refutation Map: Why “Spirit Baptism = Regeneration” Is Textually Unstable

Claim being tested: “Baptism of the Spirit = regeneration/forgiveness/covenant entry; therefore, water baptism is optional or merely symbolic.”

1. Definition Control

Problem: “Spirit baptism” in the NT is never defined as the universal moment of conversion. It is Christ’s act at specific redemptive-historical moments (Pentecost, Cornelius).

Evidence: Acts 1:5; 11:16 are the interpretive keys. Both refer to epochal events, not ordinary conversion.

2. Command Control

Problem: Spirit baptism is never commanded, whereas water baptism is always commanded.

Evidence: Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; Matt 28:19. No text says or implies “Be Spirit-baptized.”

3. Salvific Language Control

Problem: The language of forgiveness, union, cleansing, and incorporation is associated with water baptism rather than with Spirit baptism.

Evidence: Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom 6:3–4; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21.

4. Acts 10 Control

Problem: If Spirit baptism replaces water baptism, why does Peter immediately command water baptism after the Spirit falls?

Evidence: Acts 10:47–48. The extraordinary Spirit event does not negate the necessity of water baptism.

5. Timing Variability Control

Problem: In Acts, Spirit timing varies, but water baptism does not. Water baptism is the constant.

Evidence: Jews (Spirit after), Samaritans (Spirit delayed), Gentiles (Spirit before), and Ephesians (Spirit after). Water baptism is always commanded.

6. “One Baptism” Control

Problem: Ephesians 4:5 affirms “one baptism.” The most natural referent is the church’s water baptismal practice.

Evidence: Ephesians 4:5 in context of visible church unity markers.

7. Category Conflation Control

Problem: The equation collapses distinct categories: Spirit baptism, Spirit reception, indwelling, sealing, and filling are not identical.

Evidence: Section II’s terminological analysis.

8. Apostolic Practice Control

Problem: The apostles never preached Spirit baptism as the gospel response. They preached repentance and water baptism instead.

Evidence: Every conversion narrative in Acts includes water baptism; none instructs sinners to seek the Spirit’s baptism.

Verdict

The equation fails across all eight controls. It cannot be sustained exegetically. It is a theological inference imported into the text, not a conclusion drawn from the text.

XI. Engagement with Counterarguments

Counterargument 1: “Spirit baptism is the real baptism; water is only symbol.”

Response: Acts 22:16; Rom 6:3–4; 1 Pet 3:21; Gal 3:27; and Col 2:12 all attach salvific language to water baptism, not to Spirit baptism. The NT does not treat water baptism as an empty symbol.

Counterargument 2: “The Spirit regenerates; water cannot save.”

Response: John 3:5; Titus 3:5; and Acts 2:38 all join water and Spirit. Ezekiel 36 already joined them prophetically. The NT presents water and Spirit as a coordinated divine work, not as competing realities.

Counterargument 3: “1 Cor 12:13 proves universal Spirit baptism.”

Response: Even granting the instrumental reading, Paul’s baptism language elsewhere (Rom 6; Gal 3; Col 2) assumes water baptism. 1 Cor 12:13 affirms the Spirit’s role in baptism, not the Spirit’s replacement of baptism.

Counterargument 4: “Acts 10 proves baptism unnecessary.”

Response: Peter commands water baptism (10:47–48). Cornelius proves the opposite: even an extraordinary Spirit manifestation does not cancel the necessity of water baptism.

Counterargument 5: “Eph 1:13 shows Spirit before baptism.”

Response: Sealing is not Spirit baptism. These are distinct categories. Eph 4:5 confesses “one baptism”—the baptism the churches practice.

Counterargument 6: “The thief on the cross proves baptism unnecessary.”

Response: The thief died under the old covenant, before Christ’s resurrection, Pentecost, and the Great Commission. A pre-Pentecost exception cannot nullify post-resurrection apostolic commands.

Counterargument 7: “Baptism is a work, and we're saved by grace.”

Response: The NT never categorizes baptism as a “work” in the sense Paul opposes. Paul opposes works of the law as the basis of justification, not obedient faith in

response to the gospel. Baptism is the commanded response to grace, not an attempt to earn it.

Counterargument 8: “The order in Acts varies, so there's no fixed pattern.”

Response: The variable is Spirit timing; the constant is water baptism. In every case, water baptism is commanded and administered. The exceptions prove the rule: when the Spirit comes first (as with Cornelius), water baptism is immediately commanded.

XII. Conclusion

Summary of Findings

1. **Spirit baptism** is Christ's sovereign act at decisive redemptive-historical moments—not an ordinary command given to sinners.
2. **Water baptism** is the apostolic command in response to the gospel, to which Scripture ascribes forgiveness, cleansing, and incorporation into Christ.
3. **The equation** “Spirit baptism = regeneration” is absent from the NT. It is a theological inference that contradicts the text's own categories.
4. **The sign-and-seal view** is not an ancient Christian conviction. It is a 16th-century innovation, and its own architect, Zwingli, acknowledged that it contradicted “all the doctors from the time of the apostles.”
5. **The apostolic pattern** is: Gospel → Faith → Repentance → Baptism → Spirit—with baptism as the visible, commanded, salvifically significant act of incorporation.

The Core Strength of This Argument

This paper does not rest on proof-texting isolated verses. It rests on:

- The consistent terminological distinctions the NT itself maintains.
- The narrative logic of Acts across multiple conversion accounts.
- The explicit salvific language that the NT attaches to water baptism.
- The complete absence of any apostolic command to seek Spirit baptism.
- The unanimous witness of the earliest post-apostolic Christians.

- The historical acknowledgment by Zwingli himself that his view was an innovation.

Implications

- 1. For doctrine:** The categories the NT distinguishes should not be collapsed through later theological inference.
- 2. For discipleship:** Water baptism should be recovered as the commanded, meaningful, salvific act that the apostles taught it to be.
- 3. For the mission:** The gospel call should include what the apostles included: repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

One-Sentence Summary

Baptism of the Spirit is Christ's sovereign act of attestation and bestowal of the Spirit at crucial redemptive-historical junctures; it is not the commanded means of forgiveness, covenant entry, or salvation, which the apostles consistently assign to repentance and water baptism.

Appendix A: Formal Scriptural Tracing of the Argument

Following Schreiner's method, this appendix proceeds by identifying the main proposition in each key text, then showing how supporting clauses contribute to the paper's total line of argument. Schreiner emphasizes that tracing the argument requires the interpreter to isolate propositions, identify their relationships, and explain how supporting material serves the main point.

A.1 Promise and Prophecy Texts: “He Will Baptize with the Holy Spirit”

The first cluster of texts establishes the basic category of “baptism with the Holy Spirit.” In Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, and John 1:33, John the Baptist contrasts his own ministry with that of the coming Messiah. The central proposition in each case is not that converts are commanded to seek Spirit baptism, but that the stronger one, Jesus, is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. The supporting contrast is decisive: John baptizes with water, but Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit. The force of the comparison lies in agency and redemptive-historical superiority.

Acts 1:5 carries this same promise forward into the post-resurrection setting. Jesus tells the disciples that John baptized with water, but they will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, not many days from now. The immediate supporting context in Acts 1:8 clarifies the function of this promise: they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and will be Christ's witnesses. The argument, therefore, runs from promise to fulfillment to empowerment.

Acts 11:16 confirms this reading by showing how Peter later interpreted the event with Cornelius. Peter does not say that he preached Spirit baptism as the normative response to the gospel. Rather, after seeing what happened, he remembered the Lord's word. The phrase is therefore retrospective and interpretive.

A.2 Reception Texts: “Receive the Holy Spirit”

A second group of texts concerns the reception of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 is the controlling text. Peter's answer to the convicted crowd contains two imperatives and two promises: “Repent” and “be baptized”; “for the forgiveness of your sins” and “you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The main proposition is that the crowd must

respond to the gospel by repenting and being baptized. The Spirit is then presented as the promised divine gift.

Acts 8:12–17 supports the same pattern while showing that the timing of Spirit manifestation may vary. The Samaritans believe Philip’s preaching and are baptized in water, yet the Holy Spirit has not yet fallen on them until Peter and John come. The main proposition is not that water baptism is replaced or rendered incomplete, but that apostolic mediation preserves the unity of the Samaritan believers with Jerusalem.

Acts 10:44–48 is the clearest exception in the sequence, but the argument of the passage is decisive against any replacement theory. The Spirit falls on the Gentiles while Peter is still speaking. Yet Peter concludes that water cannot be withheld from those who have received the Holy Spirit. This is one of the strongest texts in the whole paper because it shows that even when Spirit-reception precedes baptism, the apostles still require baptism.

Acts 19:1–7 strengthens the point. Paul discovers disciples who know only John’s baptism. Their deficient understanding exposes deficient initiation. The sequence then unfolds: Paul explains John’s role, they are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, Paul lays hands on them, and the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

A.3 Indwelling, Sealing, and Filling Texts

Romans 8:9 and 8:11, 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19, and 2 Timothy 1:14 all belong to the category of indwelling. In Romans 8:9 the main proposition is that those who have the Spirit belong to Christ. Paul is describing the state of those who are in Christ, not using “Spirit baptism” terminology.

Ephesians 1:13–14, Ephesians 4:30, and 2 Corinthians 1:22 introduce another distinct category: sealing. The central force of the metaphor is ownership, authenticity, and future security. None of these texts uses Spirit-baptism terminology.

The filling texts are decisive because they demonstrate that not every Spirit-term can be reduced to conversion. Acts 2:4, 4:8, 4:31, 9:17, 13:9, 13:52, and Ephesians 5:18 all show that filling is repeatable and situationally empowering. Ephesians 5:18 gives the clearest doctrinal synthesis: believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. The present imperative shows that filling is not identical with a one-time conversion event.

Appendix B: Scriptural Tracing Tables

B.1 Promise and Prophecy Texts

Text	Main Proposition	Contribution to Thesis
Matt 3:11	John baptizes with water; the Coming One will baptize with the Holy Spirit.	Spirit baptism is Christ's act, not an ecclesial rite.
Mark 1:8	John's water baptism is distinct from Messiah's Spirit baptism.	Reinforces the distinction.
Luke 3:16	The stronger one baptizes with the Holy Spirit.	Embedded in messianic expectation, not response formulas.
John 1:33	Jesus is identified as the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.	Fixes the agent as Christ.
Acts 1:5	Jesus promises Spirit baptism soon.	Connects Spirit-baptism to Pentecost and empowerment.
Acts 11:16	Peter interprets Cornelius through Jesus' promise.	Functions as retrospective explanatory language.

Table 7. Promise and Prophecy Texts

Observation: These texts never present Spirit baptism as an imperative addressed to sinners. They present it as prophecy, promise, and divine fulfillment.

B.2 Gift and Reception Texts

Text	Main Proposition	Contribution to Thesis
Acts 2:38	Repent and be baptized for forgiveness; you will receive the Spirit.	Normative sequence: repentance → water baptism → forgiveness / Spirit-gift.
Acts 8:15, 17	Samaritans receive Spirit through apostolic mediation after baptism.	Timing varies, but baptism remains fixed.
Acts 10:47	Those who received the Spirit must not be denied water baptism.	Even exceptional Spirit-reception does not replace baptism.
Acts 19:2	Paul asks if disciples received the Spirit.	Reception tied to properly completed Christic initiation.
Gal 3:2	Spirit received by hearing with faith, not works of law.	Supports reception language without erasing baptismal framework.

Table 8. Gift and Reception Texts

Observation: The NT speaks frequently of receiving the Spirit. This is broader than “being baptized with the Spirit” and belongs more directly to initiation and covenant gift.

B.3 Indwelling Texts

Text	Main Proposition	Contribution to Thesis
Rom 8:9	Those who have the Spirit belong to Christ.	Distinguishes indwelling from Spirit-baptism language.
Rom 8:11	The indwelling Spirit guarantees resurrection life.	Indwelling as ongoing state with eschatological promise.
1 Cor 3:16	The church is God's temple because the Spirit dwells in it.	Corporate indwelling as distinct category.
1 Cor 6:19	The believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.	Individual indwelling as ethical reality.
2 Tim 1:14	Guard the deposit by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.	Indwelling empowers perseverance.

Table 9. Indwelling Texts

B.4 Sealing Texts

Text	Main Proposition	Contribution to Thesis
Eph 1:13-14	Hearing and believing result in being sealed with the Spirit.	Sealing = ownership/pledge language, not Spirit-baptism.
Eph 4:30	Believers were sealed for the day of redemption.	Confirms sealing's forward-looking covenantal function.
2 Cor 1:22	God sealed believers and gave the Spirit as guarantee.	Supports distinction between sealing and Spirit-baptism.

Table 10. Sealing Texts

Observation: No sealing text says believers were "baptized with the Holy Spirit." The categories should not be conflated.

B.5 Filling Texts

Text	Main Proposition	Contribution to Thesis
Acts 2:4	Disciples filled with Spirit and spoke as enabled.	Establishes filling as empowerment language.
Acts 4:8	Peter filled again before speaking.	Demonstrates repeatability.
Acts 4:31	Believers filled and speak boldly.	Communal repeatable empowerment.
Acts 9:17	Paul filled with the Holy Spirit.	Spirit-filling in Paul's call/initiation context.
Acts 13:9	Paul, filled with Spirit, rebukes Elymas.	Task-specific empowerment.
Acts 13:52	Disciples filled with joy and Holy Spirit.	Filling not reducible to conversion.
Eph 5:18	Believers commanded to be filled with the Spirit.	Filling is commanded and repeatable.

Table 11. Filling Texts

Observation: If filling is repeatable and commanded, it cannot be equated with one-time Spirit-baptism or initial reception.

B.6 Baptism Texts with Salvific/Incorporative Force

Text	Main Proposition	Contribution to Thesis
Acts 22:16	Be baptized and wash away your sins.	Cleansing/remission language attached to baptism.
Rom 6:3-4	Baptism unites believers to Christ's death and burial.	Strong union-with-Christ text.
Gal 3:27	Those baptized into Christ have put on Christ.	Baptismal incorporation language.
Col 2:12	In baptism believers are buried and raised with Christ.	Baptism and faith held together.
1 Pet 3:21	Baptism now saves through resurrection.	Strongest text against reducing baptism to symbol.

Table 12. Baptism Texts with Salvific/Incorporative Force

Observation: The NT's clearest salvific and incorporative baptismal language appears in water-baptism texts, not in "Spirit baptism" formulae.

Appendix C: Counterargument Control Texts

Counterargument	Texts	Response
Spirit baptism is real; water is symbol	Acts 22:16; Rom 6:3–4; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:21	These attach cleansing, union, and salvation to baptism itself.
Spirit regenerates; water cannot save	John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38	NT does not separate Spirit-renewal from baptismal washing.
1 Cor 12:13 proves universal Spirit baptism	1 Cor 12:13 with Rom 6; Gal 3; Col 2	Broader Pauline baptism language must control interpretation.
Acts 10 proves baptism unnecessary	Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–17	Exception results in commanded baptism, not cancellation.
Eph 1:13 proves Spirit before baptism	Eph 1:13–14; 4:5; 5:26	Ephesians includes “one baptism” and “washing of water.”
Thief on cross disproves necessity	Mark 2:5–12; Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38	Pre-Pentecost exception cannot nullify post-resurrection command.
Baptism is a work	Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; Titus 3:5; Rom 6:3–4	Paul excludes works of law/merit, not faithful obedience.
Acts varies too much for pattern	Acts 2; 8; 10; 19	Variable = Spirit timing; Constant = commanded water baptism.

Table 13. Counterargument Control Texts

Appendix D: Final Argument Map

I. Primary Thesis

The NT does not use “baptism of the Holy Spirit” as a universal synonym for conversion, regeneration, forgiveness, or entry into a covenant.

II. First-Order Supporting Claim

The NT preserves several distinct Spirit-related categories: Baptized with the Holy Spirit; Receive the Holy Spirit; Indwelling; Sealed; Filled.

Supporting texts: Matt 3:11; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; Acts 2:38; Rom 8:9; Eph 1:13; Acts 2:4; Eph 5:18.

III. Second-Order Supporting Claim

“Baptized with the Holy Spirit” is promissory and redemptive-historical, not an ordinary command given to converts.

Supporting texts: Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16.

Inference: If Spirit baptism were the ordinary means of conversion, the apostles would command it directly. They do not.

IV. Third-Order Supporting Claim

The apostles preach repentance and water baptism as the normative response to the gospel.

Supporting texts: Acts 2:38, 41; Acts 8:12–13, 36–38; Acts 10:47–48; Acts 19:5; Acts 22:16; Acts 16:30–33.

Inference: The apostolic response pattern is public, immediate, and baptismal.

V. Fourth-Order Supporting Claim

Salvific, cleansing, and incorporative language is repeatedly associated with water baptism.

Supporting texts: Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21.

Inference: If one wishes to identify the NT's ordinary covenant-entry language, these texts must carry significant weight.

VI. Fifth-Order Supporting Claim

Spirit-reception is a divine gift associated with initiation, though its timing may vary.

Supporting texts: Acts 2:38; Acts 8:15–17; Acts 10:44–48; Acts 19:1–7; Galatians 3:2.

Inference: Variation in Spirit timing does not undermine the normativity of baptism.

VII. Sixth-Order Supporting Claim

Indwelling, sealing, and filling cannot be collapsed into “Spirit baptism.”

Supporting texts: Romans 8:9, 11; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim 1:14; Eph 1:13–14; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; Eph 5:18.

Inference: Each category has its own function: indwelling = abiding presence; sealing = ownership/guarantee; filling = repeated empowerment; Spirit baptism = Christ's sovereign, epochal action.

VIII. Seventh-Order Supporting Claim

Acts 10 does not prove that Spirit baptism replaces water baptism; it proves the opposite.

Supporting texts: Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–17.

Inference: The only major reversal in the order concludes with Peter immediately commanding baptism.

IX. Eighth-Order Supporting Claim

The contested proof texts do not overturn the broader pattern.

Texts addressed: 1 Cor 12:13; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13–14.

Inference: These texts can be read coherently within the broader apostolic baptism-and-Spirit pattern without redefining Spirit baptism as the conversion rite.

X. Final Conclusion

1. Spirit baptism is Christ's sovereign act at key redemptive-historical moments.

2. The apostles do not preach Spirit baptism as the required response to the gospel.
3. The apostles preach repentance and water baptism, with the Spirit given by God.
4. Forgiveness, union, cleansing, and incorporation are associated with water baptism.
5. Later theology errs by relocating those functions to an uncommanded “Spirit baptism.”

One-Sentence Summary

Spirit baptism is Christ’s redemptive–historical act; water baptism is the apostolic command; the two are not interchangeable.

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