

# BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT – IMAGES OF THE SPIRIT

Throughout the Bible there are a number of images used to describe the Holy Spirit. Each image conveys something of his character and his work. These images also inform us of the purpose of the baptism in the Spirit for believers.

Let's look at how the NT talks about the promise of the Spirit using four of these images. For each image take time to reflect and discuss how this speaks to our lives today, and how it can shape our expectations of the Holy Spirit working through us.

## OIL – Anointing

Oil speaks of anointing. In the OT prophets, priests, and kings were all anointed with oil at the commencement of their ministries. This both spoke of their authority and the empowering of the Spirit to carry out their ministry. In some cases subsequent anointings came with new seasons of ministry.

Jesus speaks of his anointing to preach the gospel at the start of his public ministry (see Luke 4:16-21). And Jesus promises his disciples the same anointing to preach the gospel when they receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:6-11).

## WATER – Supernatural Life

Just as natural life is impossible without water, so spiritual life is impossible without the living water of the Holy Spirit. In John 4:7-15 Jesus promises the Samaritan woman water that brings eternal life. A little later in John 7:37-39 Jesus offers the crowd living water that doesn't just bring life to the drinker but flows out from them to bring life to the world. This is reminiscent of the image of the River of God in Ezekiel 47 which brings life wherever it flows. The baptism in the Holy Spirit means that the river of God flows through us to bring supernatural life to a dying world.

## WIND – Movement and Direction

The word for wind and spirit are the same word in Greek – *pneuma*. So when Jesus talks to Nicodemus about being born of the Spirit (John 3:1-8) and uses the analogy of the wind, the connection would have been really clear: it would have read something like this:

*The pneuma blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the pneuma. (John 3:8)*

This idea of the wind directing and propelling is how Peter describes the way the OT prophets prophesied (2Peter 1:21) – which is a similar phrase used to describe Paul's ship being blown along by the storm for three days before being shipwrecked (Acts 27:13-20). This is not just a gentle nudging, but fully yielding to the will of the wind. On the Day of Pentecost when the disciples were baptised in the Spirit, there was a sound of a mighty rushing wind, which blew them out of the upper room, into the streets, and ultimately to the ends of the earth!

## FIRE – Transformation

John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptise people "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt 3:11, Luke 3:16). Jesus himself said his mission was "to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49).

Another phenomenon on the Day of Pentecost was the tongues of fire that rested on the heads of each of the disciples as they were baptised in the Spirit. Throughout the scriptures fire speaks of holiness and purity. Fire is a force of transformation as it consumes what is impure and further purifies what is holy.