

PFRS Commentary

1 Corinthians 12:13

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1 Cor 12:13 (NKJV)

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:13 (PFRV)

13 For with ¹ one Spirit we all were baptized ² unto ³ one body ⁴ — whether Jews, whether Greeks, whether slaves, whether free — and all were given drink of one Spirit ⁵.

This passage is critical to the baptism issue. Unfortunately, it is wrongly translated in many Protestant English Bibles.

1. The preposition translated "by" (NKJV) and "with" (our literal translation) is the Greek word "εἰς." It literally means "in" when used in a spatial sense. When otherwise used it refers to *instrumentality*. That is, the thing used or employed by the person doing the action of the verb in order to accomplish the task. It is frequently found in baptism passages. e.g.. Mark 1:8. "*I indeed baptized you with [εἰς] water, but He will baptize you with [εἰς] the Holy Spirit.*" Also Luke 3:16. "*John answered, saying to all, 'I indeed baptize you with [εἰς] water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with [εἰς] the Holy Spirit and fire.'*" Also John 1:33. "*I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with [εἰς] water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with [εἰς] the Holy Spirit.'*"

Baptism is both with water and Spirit in the New Testament. The preposition "εἰς" points to the thing in which someone is baptized. That is, **the instrument of baptism**. It never refers to the agent of baptism, the one doing the baptizing. Unfortunately, most Protestant English translation have "by" as an acceptable translation. That is simply wrong, and implies that the Holy Spirit is the person performing the action of the verb, "baptized." If that is what Paul meant, he would have used the preposition "διὰ," which means "by" or "through" and indicates agency. According to the passages cited above, Jesus is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, the Catholic Bibles, including the Latin Vulgate and Douay - Rheims translations, translate this preposition correctly, as does Young's Literal Translation.

2. The words "were baptized" are translated from the Greek verb "βαπτίζω." The word literally means to plunge or submerge. Here, it is in the aorist tense, meaning it refers to a specific event in their past. It is also in the passive voice, meaning someone else performed the baptisms upon the subjects. Paul uses the first person plural, which means he included himself along with his readers.

3. The preposition translated "into" (NKJV) or "unto" (our literal translation) is the Greek word "εἰς." We dealt with this preposition extensively in our Baptism articles. Essentially, it means progress to a point of destination. It implies both the idea of progression as well as reaching an objective.

4. The objective (object of the preposition "εἰς") is the "body," identified in the previous verse as "the body of Christ" — the Church. Paul frequently used the metaphor of a human body to describe the function of the local church, with each member complimenting the others, and unity always being maintained. Here Paul taught that baptism unites the believer with the Church of Jesus Christ.

5. The clause "made to drink" (NKJV) is misleading. There is nothing in the Greek text that implies force. The verb is in the passive voice. But, the word itself means to "give a drink." The subjects (we) are on the receiving end of someone giving us a drink. Hence, "made" seems a poor choice. Rather "were given to drink" is the correct rendering. It seems rather obvious that being given to drink of one Spirit refers back to a metaphor Jesus employed when speaking about the Holy Spirit.

John 7:37-39

37 *On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, **let him come to Me and drink.***

38 *He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*

39 *But **this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive;** for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."*

It is apparent then that "drinking" of the Spirit is a metaphor for receiving the indwelling of the Spirit. Paul borrowed Jesus' metaphor.

Conclusion: The poor translation of this verse in many English Bibles has led to a false teaching that the Holy Spirit baptizes believers into Christ. No Scripture teaches such a thing! This fictitious "baptism" has been called the "*Baptism of the Spirit*" by many groups. There is no such thing as a baptism **by** the Spirit. Baptism is exclusively performed by Jesus and His agents (Christians acting in His name). The instruments used in the only Christian baptism in the New Testament are both water and Spirit. Baptism places the believer within the "body of Christ." This is seen clearly in Acts 2. In verse 38, Peter preached that those who believed should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ unto the forgiveness of their sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In verse 41, those who gladly received the message were baptized and added to the number of the Church. That is, they were considered "Christians" when they were baptized. There is a distinct connection between being considered a member of the body of Christ and baptism. There is also a clear connection between baptism and having one's sins remitted, and receiving the Spirit. It is apparent that the baptism with water and Spirit occur simultaneously in a single baptism. It is the "one baptism" Paul mentioned in Ephesians 4:5. Human beings act on Christ's behalf to submerge the body in water, and simultaneously Christ Himself baptized the human spirit in the Holy Spirit. The baptizer acts as Jesus' surrogate.