

# Is Initiation a Two-Step Process in the New Testament?

## A. MIDDLE AGES: TWO STEPS – BAPTISM FIRST, CONFIRMATION LATER

1. Centuries after the New Testament is written, Christians will look back at it and see evidence supporting their experience of confirmation as separate from baptism
2. The experience of the church in the Middle Ages was that baptism and confirmation took place separately, in two stages:
  - First baptism (usually in infancy), usually by a priest
  - Then, in a separate rite, at a later time (age 7 by 13<sup>th</sup> c.), confirmation by a bishop
3. In two passages from Acts of the Apostles (ch. 8 and 19) baptism is followed later by a separate ritual of laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Spirit
  - The 2-step process of initiation in these Bible passages seemed to support the practice of having baptism followed years later by confirmation for the gift of the Holy Spirit

## B. TWO UNUSUAL CASES

1. Only two passages from Acts of the Apostles describe initiation as a two-step process
  - With a first step of baptism
  - then *later* a second step of laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Spirit
2. These two accounts seem to be special, unusual, unique cases -- NOT the norm
  - Acts 8: issue here is relating Philip's ministry in Samaria to the apostles in Jerusalem
  - Acts 19: issue here is that John the Baptist's baptism was not Christian baptism
  - There is no second step in other accounts of baptism, such as Acts 2:38 Pentecost

<p>"Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit." Acts 8:14-17</p>	<p>"While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came to Ephesus where he found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the holy Spirit when you became believers?' They answered him, 'We have never even heard that there is a holy Spirit.' He said, 'How were you baptized?' They replied, 'With the baptism of John.' Paul then said, 'John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid hands on them, the holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied." Acts 19:1-6</p>
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## C. SOME PASSAGES: HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN BEFORE BAPTISM

1. Acts of the Apostles also contains accounts of the opposite, of the Holy Spirit being given BEFORE baptism

<p>"While Peter was still speaking these things, the holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter responded, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have?' He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Acts 10:44-48</p>
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D. SOME PASSAGES: NO SPECIAL RITE FOR HOLY SPIRIT

1. In the account of Pentecost below, no special ritual gesture is mentioned
2. Gift of the Holy Spirit is given is baptism

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, 'What are we to do, my brothers?' 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.' ... Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day."  
Acts 2:37-38,41

E. CONCLUDED FROM ACTS 8: MINISTER IS BISHOP

1. Church leaders also found support in Acts of the Apostles for the Roman custom that the minister must be a bishop, not a priest or deacon
2. In Acts 8, the ones who lay hands on the already baptized for the Holy Spirit are apostles
3. Bishops are successors of the apostles

F. BAPTISM & HOLY SPIRIT IN NEW TESTAMENT

1. No one pattern appears in New Testament
  - In some texts: there is no separate ritual for receiving Holy Spirit; Spirit is given in baptism
  - In some: people receive the Holy Spirit with laying on of hands after baptism
  - In some: people receive the Holy Spirit with laying on of hands before baptism
2. but baptism and Holy Spirit are interrelated, closely united, in New Testament