

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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Growth and development in the spiritual life is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. It is He who separates the believer to Christ and sanctifies us by inducing holiness of life and conduct. This does not imply complete perfection in practical experience. The believer is accepted in the Beloved but this is not what is meant by the doctrine of sinless perfection as some assert. So far as his standing before God is concerned the believer can never be more acceptable than at the moment of his identification with Christ at conversion. Experimentally, however, his condition may be very different. He is still conscious of the presence of the Adamic nature and sin, its impulses and desires, and in his life, he may often be marred by failure and blemished by fault.

The believer is predestined to be Christ-like which can be done by the indwelling of the Spirit. It is often claimed that conversion is only the first step in the Christian life and that this must be followed by a further operation of the Spirit.

And so today we have two major desires in some, namely the second blessing which is said to be the Baptism of the Holy Spirit confirmed by the speaking in tongues and the desire for sinless perfection which desires some link together. The misconception of the possibility of attaining these two goals has led to claims that an even deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's power is possible and to be sought after. Some Pentecostals, including A J Roddy in his book *Though I Spoke with Tongues*, writes that he received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit by a definite act of appropriating faith as a fully sanctified believer.

There are those who may not teach sinless perfection but state or imply that because they have been baptised in the Holy Spirit they are superior believers and those who have not been so baptised and have not spoken in tongues are inferior. Those baptised in the Spirit claim a specially privileged position yet there is no such aristocracy in the New Testament.

However great the appeal for this second blessing and sinless perfection is, it is without Scriptural foundation. The Bible does not even suggest the possibility of the complete eradication of sin. Indeed the apostle John declared that whilst there is cleansing from sin in the blood of Christ, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him to be a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1. 8, 10).

Despite what some assert there is no injunction in the Scriptures to pray for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit or the speaking in tongues. It is said that some agonise with tears to receive this. Some say that Luke 11.13 is justification for pleading for this. Even, if on that occasion, the Master was referring to the Spirit, His statements were prior to the Cross and made before His specific promise to send the Spirit after His own departure (John 15. 26; 16.7). There is no Scriptural injunction for any believer of this, or any age, to pray for the Spirit and seek the gift of tongues. On the contrary, the implication of passages such as 1 Corinthians 3. 16, Ephesians 1. 13 etc. is that every believer is the possessor of the Holy Spirit and is indwelt by Him from the moment of conversion.

There are churches that are very friendly and welcoming and major on entertainment and fun and everyone doing their own thing with upbeat music and dance and, consequently prayer and the study of the Bible is unimportant by comparison.

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the fillings of the Holy Spirit are distinct and separate matters. The baptism is a unique event, an act of Divine sovereignty and grace that happened on the day of Pentecost. The filling is to be repeated constantly upon the willingness of the believer to allow this.

In the Old Testament selected persons were filled with the Spirit for specific purposes such as in Exodus 31:3; 35:31, and endued with power for particular events (Judges 14:6, 1 Samuel 11:6, Ezekiel 3:24) or to unveil Divine purposes (1 Peter 1:11).

What then is the Baptism of the Spirit? The first reference comes from John the Baptist. He declared that he baptised with water but a coming One would baptise with the Holy Ghost and fire (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33) and he proceeded to identify the Lord Jesus as the One of whom he spoke (John 1:32-34).

The fulfilment of Our Lord's words to baptise with fire had not occurred prior to His ascension since He told His disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father which was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Lord said it would happen not many days hence and the disciples would be empowered to bear testimony.

This happened in fulfilment of Christ's words. The Galileans declared the mighty works of God in the known native languages of those who heard this. The tongues employed were recognisable, instantly understood and real language. The hearers were Jews and proselytes to Judaism.

In Acts 8:5 - 17 we have the record of the conversion of Samaritans and their experience of the Baptism in the Spirit.

Not long afterwards, Peter was summoned by a Roman centurion named Cornelius to speak to a company of relatives and the Holy Spirit fell on them and they spoke in tongues. In these two instances it was that the baptism was given, firstly, to the enemies of the Jews and, secondly, to Gentiles to indicate that the blessing was to extend beyond the nation of Israel. Such people were to come into the blessing of the one-off day of Pentecost experience.

We should rejoice in this for all believers upon conversion receive the benefit of the once-and-for-all Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

What had happened to the Samaritans was largely repeated at Ephesus. Upon conversion these men experienced the baptism and spoke in tongues but it did not take place until after their baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus in order to stress the difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism.

The modern day claim is that there are many new baptisms in the Holy Spirit every day and that they are accompanied by speaking in tongues but this is not borne out by fact. Martin Lloyd Jones writes, "In times of great revival when the Spirit of God has been poured forth and thousands have been converted, that is to say baptised in the Holy Spirit, there is generally no mention of their working miracles or that they spoke in tongues."

The popular misconception is that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is enjoyed only by a limited number of sanctified Christians who may also claim sinless perfection or, at least, claim their superiority and dismiss the inferior believers because they do not have this baptism and nor the gift of tongues. These so-called superior Christians are in Pentecostal and charismatic churches and what they say, believe and practise creates division and schism and often to alarming and detrimental effect.

The apostle Paul is clear that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit brings us into the Body of Christ upon conversion. This baptism is never referred to in the New Testament as something to be experienced after conversion or a second blessing. Nor is it described as some mysterious personal experience.

Too much is made of self with these tongue speaking people whereas we are to be humble and allow the Lord to have the pre-eminence in all things.

In any event, Paul states that tongues will cease and, historically, this happened before the close of the Apostolic age and it was only revived around 1900 by a group of believers who did not know their Bible. Why would God withdraw a major blessing for 1800 years and contradict the New Testament?

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