



July 3, 2005

Baptism Of The Holy Spirit

Two years ago I ran a series of articles concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I detailed the nature, transmission and eventual cessation of these gifts. Another aspect of the Holy Spirit that was not specifically discussed at the time was that of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If I read the scriptures correctly, there are only two instances of the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit that are recorded. The first of these was by promise, and the second as a revelation. The promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit was not made to the world at large. It was a specific promise, made to a specific group and limited to a specific time. This group was the made up of Christ's disciples, later to become his apostles as they carried on the work that Christ had begun. Preparing them for his death, Christ told them of the treatment that they would receive at the hands of man. ***"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me."*** (John 16.1-3). During the time that Christ was with them, the disciples had difficulty understanding the things that were told them and the spiritual nature of their work that they were being sent on. I do not believe that this realization really began to sink in until the resurrection, and really took hold in their minds on the day of Pentecost. For this reason, it was necessary that these men, to be entrusted with the gospel, receive some guidance as they began this great work. Christ promised them that this would be done for them. ***"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."*** (John 16.12-14). Christ went on to tell them that it was necessary the he go away so that this comforter could come and be with them. ***"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."*** (John 16.7). This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost as the 12 were gathered together. ***"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2.1-4)***. This was the fulfillment of the promise that Christ had made to these men. This was the manifestation of the gift, the Comforter, who would be with them and guide them into all truth. The second instance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was for the purpose of revelation. In Acts 10 we are introduced to Cornelius who is a devout man who prayed to God. An angel appeared to him in a vision instructing him to send for Peter who would tell him what he needed to do. As we read through the rest of the chapter we find that Peter, after being told in a vision that he should not consider what God had cleansed as unholy (Acts 10.15). Peter was also told to go with the men that had come to seek him. Skipping ahead in the events we find that Peter went to the house of Cornelius and began to speak to them. As Peter spoke the Holy Spirit fell on those in the house (Acts 10.44), in the same manner that He had on the day of the Pentecost with the apostles. Peter, later defending his contact with gentiles, stated to those in Jerusalem, ***"And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."*** (Acts 11.15-16). In my opinion, it was this event that led the Jewish Christians to understand that the gentiles were part of God's plan of redemption as well as themselves. In the same way that this caused Peter to realize that the gentiles were now included the church, so did the brethren in Judea. ***"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."*** (Acts 11.18). Throughout the book of Acts, the best source for examples of conversion, we do not find any other accounts of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Outside of the book of Acts, we find no commands to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, nor are we commanded to receive this. The promise was made to the apostles specifically, and later the gentiles were confirmed as acceptable to God by this same gift. There are other manifestations of the presence of the Holy Spirit similar that what is found in Acts 4.31, which occurred as an encouragement to them as they faced the beginning of persecution. The only form of baptism that we find commanded throughout the New Testament is immersion in water. This is the result of believing in Jesus Christ, repenting of one's sins, confessing his name publicly and then being baptized for the remission of sins. There is no indication in the New Testament that anyone is to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Those who obey the word of God receive a gift of the Holy Spirit, that gift being the remission of sins and the fact that one is now recognized by God as one of his children. From that point on we can rely on the fact that God will hear our prayers and bless us in doing that which is right. We also have the assurance that he will forgive us as we repent of our sins and turn to him in prayer with godly sorrow. This is an area that gives some a lot of trouble. Many seek the confirmation of the Spirit to let them know that they are saved. In the New Testament there is no indication that the baptism of the Holy Spirit saved anyone. Cornelius and his household were instructed to meet this requirement (Acts 10.47). Salvation by the baptism of the Holy Spirit would place the Spirit on the same level with Christ as an intercessor, another fact that the scriptures refute. We are saved when we read, believe and truly and completely obey. It's that simple. Perhaps too simple for some.

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