

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

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Introduction.

- A. In the United States, the religious scene never stops changing. It seems like men out in the denominational world are constantly coming up with new ideas about how God is supposed to be served. Over the past hundred years, one of the most powerful of these has been the charismatic movement. It began in just a few locations, but today, it has spread throughout the country, and almost all of us know people who belong to it.
- B. One of the central beliefs of the charismatic movement is a belief in the continuing baptism of the Holy Spirit. They claim that today, men are not saved by belief or water baptism or any of the other typical beliefs, but by God pouring out the Holy Spirit on the believer. Once this happens, the believer is saved, and he establishes his salvation by speaking in tongues. People who want salvation are told to pray until they receive this.
- C. Folks, this is a subject we need to know the truth about. First of all, we need to know it for our own sake, because the most precious possession we can have is the knowledge of our own salvation. Second of all, we need to know it for the sake of the gospel. I know that many of us have friends and family with charismatic beliefs, and if we don't know the truth and show them the truth, we will never bring them to the truth. This is important stuff, friends. It's a matter not just of life and death, but of life and death for the soul. Let's turn to God's word to learn the truth about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

I. What Is It?

- A. As we often do, we need to begin this inquiry by determining what the baptism of the Holy Spirit is. Thankfully, this is not a difficult task. There are a number of prophecies, especially, that speak about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and from these prophecies, we can determine what this baptism is.
- B. The first prophecy we need to look at is found in Joel 2:28-29, 32. Here's what this passage reveals to us: First of all, it tells us that the Spirit will be poured out on "all flesh," that in some way, every people will receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Second, it tells us that prophetic signs and wonders will always be the result of this baptism. Finally, look at what verse 32 says. It doesn't say, "And everyone who receives the outpouring of the Spirit will be saved." Instead, it says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Joel 2 doesn't describe the baptism of the Holy Spirit as salvation itself. Instead, it says that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a sign that will accompany salvation. This prophecy tells people that when they see the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then they can know that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
- C. We see another important prophecy about the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Luke 3:16-17. This is John the Baptist speaking here, and he reveals another important point about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John and other men like him can baptize in water, but only the Messiah, whom we know is Jesus, can baptize with the Holy Spirit. There's one other thing about this passage that's worth noting. Sometimes, you'll hear some charismatics follow the language of this passage and talk about receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit AND fire. The problem with this is that the text is actually talking about two different baptisms: the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire. Luke 3:17 tells us exactly what the baptism of fire is: it is the vengeance that Christ will take on the unrighteous. Basically, all those poor souls who pray for the baptism of fire are actually praying for Jesus to descend from heaven and punish them. I don't think I want to pray for that.
- D. We can look at one final prophecy about this baptism in Acts 1:4-5, 8. Here, Jesus is speaking to the eleven apostles, and He tells them that they will be recipients of this promise, that they will be baptized by the Holy Spirit in just a few days. Look, though, at what Jesus says the result of this baptism will be in Acts 1:8. Once again, it's not responsible for the salvation of the apostles themselves. Instead, it's so that through the miraculous powers they receive, they will be witnesses to the salvation of Jesus throughout the world.
- E. When we put all of these things together, here's what we know about the baptism of the Holy Spirit:
 1. It was **an outpouring of the Holy Spirit**.
 2. It was **administered by Jesus alone**. Only Jesus can baptize with the Holy Spirit.
 3. It was poured out **on the apostles first**. They first received the promise of power from on high.
 4. It would be poured out **then on "all flesh."** In other words, all of mankind would receive it.
 5. The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was **to give prophetic gifts**. Nothing in the Bible ever says that the purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was salvation.
 6. Finally, all of this was to be carried out **as a sign of salvation**. It let the people know that they were in the time of Joel 2, that everyone who called on the name of the Lord would be saved.

II. When Did It Happen?

- A. Now that we know what the baptism of the Holy Spirit is, we can turn to the Bible to learn when it happened. The first instance we see in Scripture of this baptism is in Acts 2:1-4. This takes place about ten days after

Jesus' ascension into heaven and final promise of the Holy Spirit, and we see it in this passage just as had been promised. The Holy Spirit was poured out by Jesus upon the apostles, and as a result, they received the prophetic gift of speaking in foreign languages. Why does all of this take place? Peter himself tells us just a little later on, when, in Acts 2:16-21, he cites the prophecy of Joel 2 that we just looked at ourselves. His point is that now is the time when everyone of the Jewish nation who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. We see the response to this and the rest of his preaching in Acts 2:37-38. The Jews believe and want to be saved, so they ask how. Peter tells them: if they repent and be baptized, they will be forgiven of their sins. The apostles' baptism in the Holy Spirit showed that the Jews could be baptized in water to be saved.

- B. We see a second appearance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 10:44-48. Here's the background: Peter has been commanded by God to go preach to the Gentile Cornelius, even though the Law told Jews to shun Gentiles. As Peter is still preaching, the Holy Spirit is poured out by Jesus on his Gentile audience. This is the second half of the Joel 2 "all flesh" prophecy. The Jews received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the person of the apostles on the day of Pentecost; now, the Gentiles also have received it through the household of Cornelius. Just like the apostles did, Cornelius and his friends begin to speak in tongues.
- C. Finally, and most importantly, it also served as a sign of salvation. This goes back to Joel 2 again. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a sign that everyone who called on the name of the Lord will be saved. When the Gentiles received this baptism and its accompanying gifts, it proved to Peter and his companions that Gentiles too were included in this "everyone." That's why Peter asks rhetorically, "Can anyone forbid water?" in Acts 10:47. When he puts the Joel 2 prophecy together with its fulfillment in the Gentiles, he understands that they too can be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, and so Cornelius and his family are saved.

III. Should We Expect It?

- A. All of this leads us logically to our next question: should we today expect to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? If we base our answer not on our hopes and feelings but on the word of God, the answer is evident. We should not expect the baptism of the Holy Spirit today, and those who say otherwise are mistaken.
- B. The first reason why we should not look for Holy Spirit baptism is that it is a promise that has been fulfilled. It has served its purpose. None of us are looking today for Jesus to be born of a Jewish virgin, are we? No more should we look for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To illustrate this, let's look at the checklist from the first part of the lesson:
 - 1. Has an outpouring of the Holy Spirit already occurred? Absolutely.
 - 2. Was it poured out by Jesus? Yes. Acts 2:33 tells us so.
 - 3. Was it poured out first on the apostles? Yes; that's what happened on the day of Pentecost.
 - 4. Was it poured out on "all flesh?" Certainly. The Jews received it on Pentecost, and the Gentiles received it in the house of Cornelius. Everybody on earth is either a Jew or a Gentile, so all flesh has received it.
 - 5. Did it give prophetic gifts? Yes; both Jew and Gentile received the ability to speak in foreign languages.
 - 6. Was it a sign of salvation? Yes! Because both Jews and Gentiles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, all Jews and all Gentiles can know that if they call on the name of the Lord, they will be saved. This is still true today. I understand that Joe and Nancy's son-in-law Brian is ethnically Jewish. Brian can look back to Pentecost, see that the Holy Spirit was poured out on his race, and be assured that if he calls on the name of the Lord, he will be saved. By contrast, I'm 100% Gentile. The fact that the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit proves nothing to me Scripturally. However, when I look at Acts 10 and see that the Gentile Cornelius had the Holy Spirit poured out on him, I too can be confident that if I call on the name of the Lord, then I will be saved. Thus, the baptism of the Holy Spirit has nothing left to prove.
- C. But let's suppose that someone answers, "You're getting the baptism of the Holy Spirit all wrong! It didn't just happen in these two isolated incidents! It happened to all Christians everywhere, and we should look for it today." The problem with this idea, that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was common, is that it doesn't stand up to Scripture. Look at Peter's take on the subject in Acts 11:15. In this passage, he is defending his actions to the apostles and brethren in Judea, explaining why he ate with Gentiles. He says of the Holy Spirit that it fell upon the Gentiles, not as happened every time a Christian was saved, not as was a common occurrence in the first-century church, but as happened to them AT THE BEGINNING. Far from being an everyday event, the baptism of the Holy Spirit had only happened once to Jewish Christians—on Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. The extreme rarity of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was what made the experience of Cornelius so remarkable.
- D. Even more importantly, though, the saving nature of water baptism tells us that we are not saved by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:5 that there is only one baptism, and the New Testament makes quite clear that that baptism is water baptism. In the book of Acts, there were only two isolated incidents of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. By contrast, water baptism is one of the main themes of the book of Acts. Let's look at one of the clearest stories of water baptism: Acts 8:36-38. Here, Philip didn't tell the Ethiopian eunuch to pray until Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit upon him. Instead, Philip took him to water by the side of the road, they went down into the water, and the eunuch rose to walk in newness of life.

Conclusion. If you need to be saved, call upon the name of the Lord through baptism today.