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Baptism in the Holy Spirit

—Five facts

The outline on this page deals with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is the first of the three works of the Holy Spirit which we charted in lesson 4.

1 *Promised by John and Jesus*

What John said about baptism with the Spirit is recorded in Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16-17, Matthew 3:10-12.

John's statement does not make it clear who was going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. What John makes clear is who the baptizer is going to be—it will be Jesus.

When the promise is spoken by Jesus himself, he then makes it clear whom he is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit...

Jesus promises the apostles that they are the ones who will be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). The matter becomes even clearer when we go on to look for the fulfillment.

2 *Fulfillment on Two Occasions*

The first occasion was what happened to the apostles in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, a few days after Jesus had foretold their baptism with the Spirit (Acts 1:2-5, Acts 2:1-4).

A similar event happened to Cornelius and his household when Peter went to preach to them (Acts 10:44-46, Acts 11:15-18)

The language of Acts 11:15-18 shows these occasions to be unique, not commonplace. There are no other recorded cases. We now consider three reasons why Holy Spirit baptism was not promised to everyone, and is not for today.

3 *A Representative Baptism*

Having studied the promises spoken, and their fulfillment, we are now in a position to see that baptism of the Holy Spirit was a representative baptism, received by a few on behalf of all.

In the case of the Gentiles, it was concluded that God, in baptizing one Gentile household with the Holy Spirit, had demonstrated that he "has

granted to the Gentiles also the repentance unto life" (Acts 11:15-18).

The baptism of the few was significant for the many, and representative of the many.

The Apostles (who were Jews) and the household of Cornelius (who were Gentiles) together represented all peoples. When God baptized the apostles with the Holy Spirit, and then Cornelius and his household, he showed all mankind, both Jew and Gentile, that he intended the one gospel for them all.

It would be superfluous to give us each individually what we have already received representatively. It is not necessary for God to baptize each and every individual person with the Holy Spirit to give them that assurance.

4 *Not the "One Baptism" For All*

There is "one baptism... the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 4:4-5, Ephesians 5:25-26).

We should be careful not to make two baptisms when we are told that there is one.

For example, when Jesus said that a person must "be born again of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5) we must not interpret that as two baptisms (one in water and the other in the Holy Spirit) but one baptism (in water only).

Thus we understand that we receive the Spirit by being baptized in water.

5 *A Direct Act of God*

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is something God must do, if it is going to be done at all. We cannot cause ourselves to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit is not an element that we can control.

The apostles could do nothing except to wait as they were told. Cornelius and his household apparently did not even expect the baptism let alone initiate it.

By contrast, we can cause ourselves to be baptized with water any hour we choose. Water is an element that we can obtain and use as we please.

Water baptism is not a direct act of God upon us, but is a command we obey. Holy Spirit baptism, on the other hand, is not a command we can

obey. It can be done only by God when and if he chooses and wills.

We yield to the whole will of God (Philippians 2:13). Far be it from us to resist the Spirit of God. Therefore we stand ready to be baptized with the Holy Spirit when and if God decides to do so to us.

If God does not act, he must intend not to act. Thus, if we do not receive baptism of the Holy Spirit it must be that God does not intend or will that we should be baptized with the Holy Spirit today.

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