

Lesson ~~2~~ PART I

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire

The baptism of the Holy Ghost has, in these days, become a widely discussed subject, and well it should be, for the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the preeminent promise for the New Testament church. It has been said that there are thirty thousand promises in the Bible, yet this is the one that God has exalted above all others for us today.

The Old Testament foreshadows the baptism of the Holy Ghost many times; we will consider a few of the direct references. Isaiah 12 gives a beautiful picture of saints who have received this experience. Because Jesus paid the debt for us, God's anger is "turned away" and He comforts His people, as they joyfully "draw water out of the wells of salvation." "And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD" (Isaiah 12:3-4). This is a common salutation among people who have received the Holy Ghost. Those who have had this experience surely "make mention that his name is exalted" (Isaiah 12:4). They are commanded to "cry out and shout" (Isaiah 12:6). No wonder all the criticism they receive does not keep them from shouting His praises!

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28). In Acts 2:16-21, Peter took up this prophecy of Joel and declared that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of it.

"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear" (Isaiah 28:11-12). This verse applies to the baptism of the Spirit as the rest and refreshing. It speaks of the stammering lips and another tongue, which we find is always the evidence that God has filled someone with His Spirit. The tongue is an unruly member, but God takes complete control of it when He speaks through the believer in other tongues.

In the New Testament, we find many direct references to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11). Here John the Baptist informed the multitudes who came out to hear him preach that there was One coming after him, meaning Jesus the Son of God, who would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and fire.

Some teach that this baptism of the Holy Ghost was just for the twelve disciples, but John was not talking to them alone; he was talking to the multitudes. The same "you" whom he had baptized in water would be baptized with the Holy Ghost! In Matthew 3:16, Jesus came to be baptized of John. Here we see the two baptizers together—one a water baptizer and the other a Holy Ghost baptizer—and John acknowledged his need to be baptized by Jesus.

The question is immediately asked, "Did not John already have the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" The answer is no. It is true that John was filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth. He was the last of the prophets and was even more than a prophet. He had the spirit of prophecy as did all the old prophets and was anointed as were the kings and priests who were under the law. But all of them, including John, had to make a blood offering for their sins each year. It was impossible for John or anybody else to receive the baptism of the Spirit as long as Jesus was alive. The new and living way was not made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing (Hebrews 9:8; 10:19-20). It was not possible for any person to receive the Holy Ghost baptism until after the

new covenant came into force. (See Hebrews 9:16-17.)

Jesus taught that believers would receive the Holy Ghost baptism (John 7:37-39). In His last words He told His disciples they would “be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:5). This great promise was soon fulfilled, but when He gave the promise, it was still future. Why did He not give the fulfillment to them then? Because He was not yet in His office as high priest, and He does not do business outside of His office. It was necessary for Him to enter heaven itself before God would pour out the Holy Ghost baptism. God could only baptize people with His Spirit after Jesus atoned for sins with His blood. As the high priest under the law went alone into the Most Holy Place with blood for himself and for the people (Hebrews 9:7), so Jesus went into heaven by His own blood and appeared in the presence of God for us. Jesus said, “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come” (John 16:7).

The Holy Ghost baptism is not limited to prophets, priests, and kings, as the anointing of the Spirit was under the first covenant. Rather, it is for “as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

This truth makes very clear the words of Jesus concerning John: “Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matthew 11:11). In other words, the least person baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire is greater than John.

Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12). Believers would heal more sick, cleanse more lepers, and raise more from the dead than He did. The greater works were to be done through the power of the Holy Ghost. After the Day of Pentecost, the disciples went out and laid their hands upon people, and they received the Holy Ghost. This is something that Jesus did not do, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given. Significantly, a person who can help people pray through to the Holy Ghost is doing a greater work than one who has much success in praying for the sick but does not lead them to receiving the Holy Ghost.