

Lesson

3

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Day of
PentecostA distinct
experience

“And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4)

The Bible speaks clearly of a distinct spiritual experience called the *‘Baptism in the Holy Spirit’*. This experience is separate to, and follows on from, conversion. John the Baptist declared to the crowds:

“I baptise you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire”

See also Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26; Acts 1:5 & 11:16

When Jesus was thirty years of age, he stood in the waters of the Jordan River being baptised by John. The Spirit of God descended upon him like a dove, filling him mightily and empowering him for supernatural ministry:

“Now it came about when all the people were baptised, that Jesus also was baptised, and while He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, ‘Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased ...’” (Luke 3:21-23)

“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness” (Luke 4:1)

“And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district” (Luke 4:14)

Jesus’ experience should be duplicated in the lives of all who believe in Him. He encouraged each one of us to ask the Father for the Holy Spirit:

“Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:11-13)

The Holy Spirit is received by the believer as an abiding, personal presence. Jesus always spoke of the Holy Spirit as a **PERSON**, never a mere *‘influence’*. He is an equal member of the Godhead, and to be worshipped, honoured and respected as such (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:8,13-15).

Jesus taught that those who were baptised in the Holy Spirit would enjoy greater privileges and blessing than even the disciples (John 16:7; 7:38-39).

Jesus needed the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to firstly commence, then maintain, and finally complete His ministry on earth. We should remember this when we are tempted to go it alone in our own strength, without the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide us, fill us and empower us.

Manifestations of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit was not given just to make us feel good, or so that we might enjoy dynamic excesses and manifestations - although these can be a legitimate expression of what the Holy Spirit may be doing in a person's life. Throughout history, from the experiences of the first disciples in Acts 2:1-4, to today, wherever the Holy Spirit moves with power and anointing, such as when we see or read about great revivals, strange things can happen - and often do! When the reality of the power and presence of Almighty God touches man unexpectedly and without warning, such as we read about in Acts, unusual and often unexplainable, miraculous things can occur.

For the disciples, it was the tongues of fire and the mighty wind, and the gift of tongues, which heralded in the present Church era. These were supernatural occurrences which caught the attention of the whole of Jerusalem and saw thousands of souls won for the kingdom that day.

For much of the 90's we heard about the "Toronto Blessing", Rodney Howard-Browne or the 'Pensacola Revival'. There have been others since, but what about these words, written over 100 years ago by Aimee Semple McPherson, the founder of the International Four Square movement, a established and respected world-wide Pentecostal denomination today:

"What about this being slain, prostrated, lying "under the power"? You do not think it looks dignified! I wonder whether Peter looked dignified when he lay in a trance and saw his vision (Acts 10:9-16). What of John on Patmos when he lay at Jesus' feet as one dead, or Daniel as he lay in a vision, or Saul when he fell in the dust of the road as Jesus revealed Himself? We might go on to mention Isaiah, Jeremiah and others who fell prostrate before Him. We have the clear record of prostration in the early Methodist Church, the Salvation Army and the Welsh revival. And today (over 100 years ago) throughout the whole world, wherever God is pouring out His Spirit, the same thing is taking place. When I go to heaven I expect to see angels and men before Him prostrate fall, as they "bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all".

However you may view these things, the fact of the matter is that while many traditional denominations are declining worldwide, the Pentecostal movement is exploding with growth in many areas of the world. In the mid-70's there were some 20 million Pentecostals in the world. By the mid-90's there were over 400 million! Today this number is closer to one billion!, and continues to increase exponentially. Pentecostal (or Charismatic) believers make up the second largest Christian grouping after the Catholics, who are, at time of writing, declining at a rate of some 150,000 members per year!

The Purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit was given for a purpose. It is not by accident that you have come into the kingdom for such a time as this. We live in very exciting times indeed!

1. Jesus himself, in his own ministry before men, conclusively proved the value and need of a Spirit-filled life. If Jesus, born without sin, needed the power of the Holy Spirit in his own life, how much more do we?
2. To fulfil the promise of Scripture (Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 59:20-60:1; Zechariah 10:1; Hosea 6:3; Ezekiel 34:26; Joel 2:28).
3. The Holy Spirit is essential to our fulfilling God's purposes for our lives. Without "power from on high" it is impossible to live a supernatural life and fulfil our destiny as children of the kingdom (Acts 1:8-9).
4. The Lord Jesus Christ promised us many wonderful things, providing we receive the Holy Spirit after we believe. The following assurances are examples of what is promised to us through our receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit:
 - a) Assurance of our salvation. We were never meant to function in our Christian walk without the power and confidence that is available through the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,20; 17:21-22; 1 John 3:24).
 - b) Enjoy the same access to the Father as Jesus, and have the same power in prayer (John 16:7,23-24; Romans 8:26-27).
 - c) Bring forth much fruit for the glory of God (John 15).
 - d) Enjoy divine, supernatural power to accomplish the miracles of God within our own and other people's lives (see John 14:12-14). The endowment of power from on high (Acts 1:8) quickens our physical, mental, moral and spiritual being beyond measure.

"... Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39)

When we are baptised in the Holy Spirit, we will hunger after righteousness in a way not experienced before. This supernatural baptism does not make us perfect, nor does it automatically give us all the answers that we may need in life. Rather, it is a well of living water springing up inside us. We just have to avail ourselves of its power to be victorious Christians, living lives unstained by the world.

Gift of Tongues ... The Initial Evidence?

How do we know when we have been baptised in the Holy Spirit? If you ask anyone who has had this experience you will find that they just know when they've received it. There is often such a dramatic change in their lives that the adjustment to this new life 'in the Spirit' is nothing short of extraordinary. The Lord graciously endows the newly baptised person with a positive sense of His presence and a hunger for a deeper walk with Him.

The Lord also gives us a sign whereby we can know for sure that we have received the baptism. That sign is the supernatural ability to speak in new tongues (Acts 2:1-4; Acts 10:1-48; Acts 19:1-6).

There is great reading to be found in 1 Corinthians ch's 12 and 14 regarding the gifts and various manifestations of the Holy Spirit, which is worth further study. Paul also mentions in these passages that he wants everyone to speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5), and that he (Paul) speaks in tongues more than all of his audience (1 Corinthians 14:18).

It is clear from these passages that speaking in tongues is the primary gift that confirms we have indeed been baptised in the Holy Spirit.

The story of how God led Peter to Cornelius' home (Acts 10:44-48 & 11:18) and then, to the Jewish believer's amazement, proceeded to baptise them all in the Holy Spirit, is one of the highlights of the book of Acts. The outward sign that convinced Peter, and later the other disciples, was the manifestation of '*glossolalia*', which Greek for speaking in tongues!

Paul's experience at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7) was similar. Although it would have been common knowledge and general practice to receive the Holy Spirit and pray in tongues as a believer, these Ephesian believers, about twelve in all, had missed out. Just like today, it was fairly easy, after a short period of time and a few simple questions, to ascertain whether these men had been baptised in the Holy Spirit, and then introduce them to this wonderful experience.

As soon as Paul discovered these faithful men, he inquired as to whether or not they had: "***received the Holy Spirit when they believed?***" (Acts 19:2)

Paul then proceeded to lead the Ephesian Christians into a new and thrilling experience which we call today the 'baptism in the Holy Spirit'. They prayed in tongues and prophesied, and we know they then started to move in the power of the Holy Spirit because history tells us that many people were subsequently saved, and a large church was established in what was a key provincial city of the Roman Empire in Asia at that time.

To receive power for witnessing and ministry, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is essential, and praying in tongues comes with the package!

An important point to note here, however, is that:

Your salvation is not dependent upon you praying in tongues

Unfortunately, there are a couple of fringe Pentecostal denominations that teach this, but it has no biblical foundation and the wider Pentecostal fraternity rejects this as false teaching.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is spoken of in several different ways, and by a number of different names, each describing a different aspect of this wonderful experience:

- ◆ **Baptism in the Spirit** (John 1:33) - full immersion into the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ **Gifts of the Spirit** (1 Cor 12) - emphasising gifts of the Spirit for believers.
- ◆ **Receiving the Spirit** (Acts 19:2) - refers to the actual moment of reception.
- ◆ **Filled with the Spirit** (Acts 2:4) - suggesting something poured into a person.

What's in a Name

Power to be Witnesses

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8)

Jesus promised His disciples that when the Holy Spirit came upon them they would receive **“power to be His witnesses”**. The change in their lives was dramatic, enabling them to be powerful and effective preachers of the Gospel.

When we are baptised in the Holy Spirit we too receive power to be Jesus’ witnesses. It does not mean that we will all become great evangelists! But there does come a joy, a freedom, and a boldness in sharing who Jesus is, and what He has done for us, with others.

It is so easy to be caught up in church life, enjoying the blessing of God and the company of your brothers and sisters in the Lord. This is not wrong, but we need to remember that we are commissioned to witness for Jesus, who came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). We are commissioned to do likewise:

“Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:18-20)

A very personal Experience

Obviously, the Holy Spirit plays an important part in the life of a Christian. To live effectively for Jesus we must make the Holy Spirit welcome in our lives, and allow Him to take possession of every area of our being as we yield ourselves to Him.

When Jesus baptises us with the Holy Spirit He does so in a very personal way that seems to suit our individual lives and personalities. Some receive the baptism when they are alone at home, others after being prayed for by another Christian. Frequently the baptism in the Holy Spirit comes through prayer and the laying on of hands. This was a common experience for the early church (see Acts 8:17; 19:6) although not exclusively so (Acts 10:44-46). God sometimes acts in sovereign and unexpected ways.

1. God gave the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost: He is here - it is up to us to receive Him (Acts 2:38; 19:2).
2. We receive the Holy Spirit by faith (Galatians 3:2,5,13-14).
3. The Holy Spirit is not received on our merit or personal holiness.
4. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we begin to learn some simple lessons of cooperation with Him - obedience should follow.
5. We receive a Person, not just an experience.
6. God’s evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in a previously unknown and unlearned tongue. The miracle is not that the Christian speaks, but in what he speaks - the first is natural, the other is entirely supernatural. When the believer feels the supernatural moving of the Spirit his part is to speak whatever sounds come. In Acts 2:4, the Word of God indicates that the Holy Spirit gave believers the words, or sounds, but they spoke them. The Holy Spirit prompted them to speak.

God's Desire is to Baptise you in the Holy Spirit

Jesus has given the most concise description of the need for every believer to strongly desire the fullness of the Holy Spirit in John 7:37-39.

Here, He indicates that there must be a deep thirsting, a definite desire, for the things of God. The person who thirsts after God is invited to come to Jesus and partake of the rivers of living water that He offers.

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness guarantees satisfaction in area of spiritual things according to Jesus (Matt 5:6). This is also the prerequisite to having the "rivers of living water" flow out of our being.

It is God's desire that you be baptised in the Holy Spirit. You must ask Jesus to baptise you with the Holy Spirit, and receive Him by faith.

Begin to thank God for this wonderful gift. Praise Him for His glory, majesty and power. Yield your tongue and your voice to Him, and respond to the sounds that are formed by the Holy Spirit.

At this point ignore your feelings, and any thoughts that may try to keep you from enjoying this exciting experience. Concentrate on Jesus, and allow the Holy Spirit to flow out of you in the form of the rivers of living water that Jesus has promised.

Some Questions Answered from Scripture

1. **What is the baptism in the Holy Spirit? (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5)**
2. **What was "the promise" referred to by our Lord? (Joel 2:28)**
3. **When did this outpouring commence? (Acts 1:1-4; Acts 2:16-18)**
4. **Why did the disciples need to wait? (John 7:37-39; Acts 2:33)**
5. **Was not this promise only for the Apostles? (Acts 1:12-15)**
6. **But was it not for the Jews only? (Acts 10:44-48; Acts 11:15-17)**
7. **Is this promise (the baptism in the Holy Spirit) for us today?**
8. **Are we not baptised in the Holy Spirit when we are saved? (Luke 10:20; Acts 8:12; Mark 16:16)**
9. **But have not all Christians got the Holy Spirit? (John 3:6; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-17)**
10. **What is the baptism for? (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8)**
11. **Is this experience necessary for all Christians? (Luke 3:22; Acts 1:4; Acts 8:14-16; 19:1-2; Eph 5:18)**
12. **Should we expect supernatural signs to follow our being baptised in the Holy Spirit? (Mark 16:17,18; Acts 2:33; 8:18; 14:18)**
13. **How did believers know when they had received the Holy Spirit? (Acts 2:4; 8:17,18; 9:17; 1 Cor 14:18; Acts 10:45-46; 19:6)**
14. **Were not these tongues given solely for preaching to the strangers frequenting Jerusalem? (1 Cor 14:2; Acts 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor 14:22)**
15. **But what is the use of tongues today? (1 Cor 14:2; Acts 2:11; 10:46; 1 Cor 14:5; 12:10; 14:4)**
16. **Are "tongues" languages spoken only on the earth? (1 Cor 13:1)**
17. **May we expect other supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit? (1 Cor 12:7-10,31; 1 Cor 14:1,39; Mark 16:20; Acts 4:12-14,30)**
18. **Were not these gifts intended to be transitory? (Rom 11:29; Jam 1:17; 1 Cor 13:8)**