

Leading People to Spirit Baptism

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Acts 2:1-4, 14-18

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."

I. Setting the framework:

The fundamental question we are asking is this: *can this sort of thing still happen? Was Pentecost an experience for the apostles and early church alone, or can it be ours as well?*

We are going to briefly discuss the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Let me provide a framework for what that is: *the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a work that Christ does in a believer's life to enable him or her to be a more effective witness and laborer.* In short, it is Christ making Christians more effective.

II. What is the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

There are two times in scriptures when the original disciples received the Holy Spirit. They received the Spirit before Jesus' ascension and again after Jesus' ascension.

A. Prior to the ascension

John 20:22 *"And when he had this he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"*

The effect of this reception of the Spirit in between the resurrection and ascension was multi-fold:

- **Belief:** this is seen in the story of doubting Thomas later in John 20. Thomas was the only one not present when the Spirit was breathed into the disciples, and was therefore a hardened unbeliever who vowed never to believe (John 20:24-25). The Spirit is breathed into us in order that we might believe.
- **New life (regeneration):** The Spirit is the breath of God breathed into us to create new life where there was once only death (ref. *Valley of Dry Bones* Ezekiel 37; Ephesians 2:5).
- **Illumination:** during his time with them before the ascension Jesus opened their eyes (Luke 24:31), a result of the Spirit's illumination. We cannot understand the gospel or scriptures without divine illumination.
- **Forgiveness of sins:** Not only were the disciples sins forgiven, but they would be able to preach the message of forgiveness to others (John 20:23). As a result of the Spirit invading our hearts, our sins are forgiven and we are set in right relationship with God.

The disciples had received the Holy Spirit, the *new life* of God breathed into them by Christ himself. Look, however, at this additional promise that is made to them.

Luke 24:49 *“And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”*

The disciples had already received the Holy Spirit prior to his ascension, but Jesus makes a promise that they will receive the Spirit after his ascension as well.

B. After the ascension

The second time they received the Holy Spirit was after Jesus' ascension in Acts 2 when they received what Jesus promised (Luke 24) and Joel prophesied (Joel 2).

This is what we mean by the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father upon you. *We are referring to this second reception after the ascension.*

The Father has made a promise (which Peter in Acts 2:38-39 says is available for all Christians) that we would be clothed with power from on high, so that we can:

- a. Prophecy
- b. Dream dreams and see visions
- c. Witness boldly
- d. Labor fruitfully for the kingdom
- e. Give demonstrable evidence of the anointing and power of God

This is what it really boils down to: *living this radical life of Spirit-filled Christianity that is modeled for us in Acts, the life we've been called to.*

The baptism in the Spirit is a fundamental work God does to enable us to do this.

III. How do you receive it?

- Pray
- Wait
- Cry out for faith
- Laying on of hands
- Believe Luke 11:13

Luke 11:13 *“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

IV. How do I know I’ve been baptized?

This is most commonly known through the gift of tongues. Although there are some instances in scripture in which tongues is not explicitly recorded, the general pattern is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was accompanied by speaking in tongues.

Paul wanted all the Corinthians to speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5) and he thanked God that he spoke in tongues more than they did (1 Corinthians 14:18). The gifts of tongues provides a way (according to Jack Hayford in *Beauty of the Spiritual Language*) to press into the heart of God, enjoy the fellowship of the Trinity and have our spirits uplifted and magnify the Lord with supernatural ability.

All Christians are able to receive this gift (not some exclusive ‘class’ of special people) and we should all desire to be baptized in the Spirit so that we can speak in tongues.

V. Common hindrances to receiving the baptism

1. **Ignorance:** In Acts 19 Paul asked the believers at Ephesus if they had been baptized in the Spirit and it was very clear from their response that they did not know what he was talking about. It’s possible to think that you’ve already been baptized or ignorant as to what it is. Maybe you’ve never prayed for it because nobody has ever told you to. Hopefully this discussion has helped to remove this hindrance.
2. **Providence:** God will do things in his own timing, which is better than ours. There are Christians who, due to no hidden sin or fault of their own, ask and do not receive, because of God’s providential timing. God will at times delay the answer to increase our desire and faith, so that we come back to him and ask again.

3. **Pride:** It takes humility to say, “I haven’t experienced all that God has.” Acknowledging that there is a reception of the Holy Spirit awaiting us, a fundamental work that God is yet to do takes humility. Our attitude should be one of thankfulness for what God has already done in our lives, but humble desperation and hunger for God to do more.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones encountered some of this pride in folks who said to him that they had ‘got it all’ at their conversion and didn’t need another work of God in their lives. His exhortation to them was:

"Got it all? Well if you have 'got it all' I simply ask, in the Name of God, why are you as you are?" Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones - "Joy Unspeakable", p.280 (cited from <http://pentecostalpositivnotes.blogspot.com>)

I was talking to a brother one time who thought that he had been baptized in the Holy Spirit yet acknowledge there was a disconnect in his life. When the church would gather and the Spirit fell he felt like an observer not a participant. I told him that I believed it was because he was not baptized in the Spirit. I referred to this quote by Dr. Lloyd-Jones and pleaded with him to take stock of his life and ask himself *if I have all of God I need, why do I feel this disconnect?* To his credit, this brother would not let his pride rob him of receiving more of God through acknowledging his need. He cried out to God for more and Jesus answered his prayer by baptizing him in the Spirit that night.

VI. Why is this important?

The Holy Spirit can be just as present and active today as he was at Pentecost when tongues of fire came down and a mighty rushing wind blew through.

Generations come alive that read Acts and realize that “*This is for today! This is for us!*” God can still do the things he did back then. We can live like the Christians in the New Testament lived and their experience can be ours as well.

Charles Spurgeon read Acts this way:

“My object is not to talk of the descent of the Holy Spirit as a piece of history but to view it as a fact bearing upon us at this hour, even upon us who are called in these latter days to bear our testimony for the truth”
Power for You, p. 89.

The reality that *Pentecost is for today* is a fact that is bearing upon us, even now. Let the fact of an impending descent of the Spirit and visitation from God bear down on you and awaken you from your spiritual sleeping.

As we are awakened to these realities and we are baptized in the Spirit, we'll find ourselves more fruitfully living the Spirit-filled lives we've been called to as the New Testament Church.

Our closing prayer should be that of Spurgeon:

“God, send us a season of glorious disorder. Oh, for a sweep of wind that will set the seas in motion and make our ironclad brothers now lying so quietly at to roll from stem to stern. As for us, who are as the little ships, we will fly before the gale if it will but speed us to our desired haven. Oh, for fire to fall again—fire which will affect the most stolid! This is a sure remedy for indifference. When fire falls into a man’s bosom, he knows it, and when the Word of God comes home to a man’s soul, he knows it, too. Oh, that such fire might first sit upon the disciples and then fall on all around!”

“For, to close, there was then a daily increase of the church: ‘The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved’ (Acts 2:47). Conversion was going on perpetually. Additions to the church were not events which happened once a year, but they were everyday matters. ‘So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed’ (Acts 19:20).

“Oh, Spirit of God, You are ready to work with us today even as You did then! Stay not, we beseech You, but work at once. Break down every barrier that hinders the incoming of Your might. Overturn, overturn, sacred wind! Consume all obstacles, heavenly fire, and give us now both hearts of flame and tongues of fire to preach Your reconciling word, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.” Power for You, p. 112.