

# Holy Ghost Baptism

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is one of the most apparent and undeniable realities of the Holy Scriptures. It was prophesied by Old Testament sages, John the Baptist verified it, and Jesus promised that it would come just a few short days after His ascension.

The purpose of this writing is to offer an explanation of this spiritual phenomenon. We also, want to answer many honest questions propounded by sincere doubters, while exposing certain deliberate misrepresentations of incorrigible skeptics.

On the shore of Jordan one day we see a prophet called John. Listen as he says, "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." (Matt 3:11) Further, he declares, "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." (John 1:33) Christ is introduced to the world as the one who will baptize us with the Holy Ghost.

However, this Holy Ghost baptism could not be brought to pass until Jesus died, was resurrected and glorified. Some will say this is not true, for John the Baptist, Elisabeth, Zechariah, and Mary were filled with the Holy Ghost years before Jesus ever died. Also others will say, "Didn't the prophets have the Spirit of God in them when they prophesied?" We answer, "True but these holy people before the cross did not receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost." How can we say this? The Apostle John says plainly, ". . . the Holy Ghost was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39) What did these people have, then?

The Apostle Peter states that ". . . holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21) David said, "The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." (2 Samuel 23:2) God certainly moved on and through these great men, and they were holy in their generation. However, God had something better for us.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh." (Joel 2:28) "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." (Jeremiah 31:33) "And I will pray the Father and, he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." (John 14:16) These are all prophecies relative to the promise of the Holy Spirit; and they present a contrast between conditions existing prior to their fulfillment, and subsequent to their fulfillment.

Man's relationship to God changes as a direct result of this great Holy Spirit baptism. "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." At one time God's Spirit came only to a select and certain few. But now, says Joel, God's Spirit is going to be available to every son of Adam. Friend, this means if you and I want to partake of God's Spirit, we may. God restricts himself to no certain group or class now. Jesus promised, "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37) Peter assures us that ". . . the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off,

even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39) Do not be afraid to ask God for the Holy Spirit. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13) Yes, one great change brought by the advent of the Holy Spirit is that now all mankind is eligible for direct communion with God.

Secondly, we read that God would put His law in our inward parts and write it on our hearts. Oh, the greatness of God's love! Stephen's charge to the Jews was, "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." (Acts 7:53) Paul makes this confession, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Romans 7:19) God knows that a mental assent and acquiescence to Divine Law is not enough. "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts." (Psalm 51:6) God promised to put his law in our hearts so that we would desire to obey him.

Psychologists tell us that we care little, if any, for facts or ideas that do not affect us emotionally. However, if our emotions are triggered, we will put all of our strength and effort, every fiber of our being, into that about which we are enthusiastic. So it is that when God fills us with His Spirit we become joyously happy, we become rapturously engrossed in worship, we become zealously affected to do good works, and we experience moments of complete ecstasy. It is because God touches our souls, which are the seats of our emotions. The pen of His Spirit puts His law in our inward parts. The law we could not keep, we now love to obey. The commandment once grievous is now our delight.

That which we once hated, we love. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17) So then the advent of the Spirit makes it possible for us to obey from the heart the laws of God which were incompatible with our old nature.

Thirdly, Jesus said that the Comforter would abide forever. The Holy Ghost comes to stay with us until we come to the end of our way. One thing that Jesus could not do when He was here was to be with all His people bodily at all times. When the bodily presence of Jesus was taken from the disciples, what do we see? We see the Apostle Peter deny the Lord, curse and swear. We see the Emmaus travelers, weary and discouraged, retreating from Jerusalem. We see doubting Thomas as he refuses to believe in the resurrection. We find some disciples behind locked doors, others turning back on their ministry to resume secular occupations. All were filled with gloom without the presence of Jesus to cheer. Then the risen Christ gathers His flock together; and prior to His ascension, he instructs them to go to Jerusalem, where soon they shall be endued with power from on high. "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." (John 14:18) Jesus could not be with us all bodily but, Praise God, He comes to us as the Holy Spirit to abide forever.

Watch Peter now! Observe the power and zeal with which the disciples, transformed, bear witness of His resurrection. What happened? Is Jesus there? Aren't they alone now? Yes, Jesus is one bodily; but He abides forever now in their hearts! Will He ever appear again bodily?

Yes, he promised to return; but until they see Him face to face, His Holy Spirit will never fail to lead and guide them into all truth. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt 28:20) So, dear friend, if you have tried to be a Christian, and your life is full of failure; if you have tried to serve God but have become weak and discouraged; if the power and zeal and fervor of the Apostles are absent in your life, you need to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Yes, the coming of the Spirit means that Jesus is with us always, even until the end of the world. He is here to comfort us when we are discouraged, to lead us when we can't see the way, and to make us bold God-anointed witnesses of salvation.

Still some doubter may say, "Is it absolutely necessary for a person to have the Holy Spirit baptism?" The great Apostle Paul states it briefly and clearly, as though to settle it for all generations. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9) "So then," one asks, "how do I receive the Holy Spirit? How do I know when I have it?" One answers, "I received the Holy Spirit as a baby when I was baptized." Another says, "I received the Holy Spirit when I was confirmed into the church." Still another says, "I poured out my heart to God at an old-fashioned altar. I received great peace, and I believe that I received the Holy Ghost then." One more desires to give is testimony, "I don't believe in infant baptism. I confessed my sins as a man and was baptized in water. I accepted the Holy Spirit by faith as I came out of the water." We find almost as many answers as we do churches. Everyone believes in his own way: but what do the Scriptures teach?

We turn your attention now to the Book of Acts. Here you will discover Pentecost, the "birthday of the church."

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them oven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4)

No doubt many readers have gone along with us wholeheartedly until now. At this juncture many people absolutely refuse to examine, study or even consider the relationship of "other tongues" to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "Tongues are of the devil!" is their flippant remark; and that settles the issue for them. If you are such a person, we invite you to stop reading now. You are just wasting your time. No reasoning, or Scriptural confrontation with divine facts will persuade you. Any argument, no matter how cogent, is lost upon such a person. However, if you are in earnest and desirous of perhaps making a more thorough investigation of Pentecost, as we are convinced many people are, we shall proceed.

On the day of Pentecost, in the upper room about one hundred and twenty believers were gathered. Luke tells us that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.

Virtually all religious leaders come face to face with this passage of Scripture at one time or another. What they do with it will either justify or condemn them in the day of judgment.

The religious leaders of Christ's day rejected Him, calling Him Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils. This they did in spite of the fact that He fulfilled every prophetic Scripture concerning himself out of the Old Testament. Why did they do this? Simply because they refused to investigate the Scriptures, or test the validity of His claims. Eyes blinded by tradition were unable to focus properly, and they failed to recognize Him who is the Way, the truth, and the Life.

So, today, religious leaders look askance at God's great gift, and attribute it to the Prince of Devils. This, in spite of the abundant testimony of God's holy book. Alas, for they too have missed the way!

Those who do not accept or believe in the Pentecostal phenomenon of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, cannot deny that it is in the book. So they attempt to explain it away by rationalization, or what we consider to be a distortion of the facts. We shall now present some of the arguments which we have heard and try to show why we cannot accept them.

Some people are very sure that only the Apostles spoke in tongues. In Acts 2 we read that all of the believers spoke in other tongues. There were only twelve Apostles! There were 120 believers. In Acts 10 and 19 we read of Cornelius and the Ephesian believers respectively. In 1 Cor. 14 we read that the Corinthian Church spoke in other tongues. Certainly, anyone who studies the Bible will not say that only the Apostles spoke in tongues.

Another misconception is that early Christians spoke in tongues in order to preach the Gospel to men of other languages. They cite the second chapter of Acts, where the multitude understood what was spoken by the Christians of the upper room. This is a very strong point with some, so let us consider it carefully. Was it necessary for the disciples to speak in other languages in order for the multitudes of Jews "out of every nation under heaven" to hear the Gospel?

First of all, you must remember that all Jews spoke two languages. They spoke the language of the country of their citizenship, and they spoke Aramaic. All Jews, regardless of country, spoke Aramaic in their temple worship. Aramaic was a combination of several Semitic tongues. It was spoken by Jesus as well as by all the Jews in Jerusalem on Pentecost. If you are a Gentile and doubt this, we invite you to contact a Rabbi. He can verify the fact that all Jews in Christ's day spoke Aramaic. Notice also that after the tongues were over, Apostle Peter preached to that multitude. Now enough of them understood his preaching that three thousand obeyed the call that very day. Certainly the tongues were not needed to preach the Gospel on Pentecost!

Now let us look at Cornelius and his household in Acts 10. According to the theory that teaches tongues were used to preach the Gospel, we should find Peter preaching to those Gentiles in other tongues. But, we read, "And they of the circumcision (Jews) which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. . . ."

It is apparent that Peter preached, and that Cornelius spoke in tongues when he received the Holy Ghost. Also it seems that the "speaking in tongues" was the sign which convinced the Jews that God's precious gift was poured out on the Gentiles. The word "for" in verse 46 means "because."

Thirdly, let us consider Paul's admonition to the Corinthian Church, in the light of the theory that early Christians "preached in tongues." Preaching is done in church, or any gathering of persons assembled to hear God's Word. "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." Does it sound like Paul preached in tongues? Definitely not!

Another popular theory to explain the Pentecostal miracle of other languages as the initial evidence of the Holy Ghost baptism is to call it "the gift of tongues." And so to explain why other tongues are never manifested in their church, they give this scripture: "Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" Evidently, they reason, Paul is suggesting that not all in the Church speak with tongues. They say, "We agree." Also they read, "Yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." This shows that testifying and preaching in the Church are much more important than speaking in tongues, they affirm, so you Pentecostals have it all wrong. God doesn't require "other tongues" for everyone and Paul even goes so far as to recommend that other tongues give place to good preaching. And we would much rather hear a good sermon than all of that "uncontrolled gibberish." Let us show why the speaking in tongues at Pentecost was not the "gift of tongues." We believe in the "gift of tongues" wholeheartedly, and it has its place in our services. Now, the Apostle Paul regulates and gives specific instructions concerning the use of this gift in the church. Let us see if these instructions apply to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, "Let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret." (1 Cor 14:27) We read on the day of Pentecost that they all began to speak in other tongues, not just two or three. And we read nothing at all of any "gift of interpretation." Let us go further. Paul said, "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God." If the "gift of tongues" was manifested on Pentecost, it was completely out of order!

Look at the household of Cornelius. All who heard Peter's message that day received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Nothing is said about two or three; they all spoke. Nothing is said about any interpretation. Why? Because it was not the "gift of tongues", it was the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Thirdly, let us observe the Ephesian believers in Acts 19. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake in tongues and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve." They neither spake by two or three, nor was there any interpretation. Why? Again we say because it was the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and not the "gift of tongues."

The "gift of tongues" is in the church. Not everyone in the church has the "gift of tongues." But everyone who receives the Holy Ghost does speak in tongues as the initial evidence of that experience.

Someone says, "I can show you several places in the Bible where they received the Holy Ghost, but it doesn't say that they spoke in other tongues," True this is, but, it doesn't say that they did not speak in other tongues. Notice this verse of Scripture : "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude here used the phrase "of the common salvation." The word common here means "shared similarly by all the members of a group or kind." In other words, salvation was one thing that all the early Christians had in common. They all believed the same Gospel, and they were all saved the same way. Therefore, logic tells us that if some of them spoke in other tongues when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, then they all did.

Now we would like to deal with one of the most deceptive commentaries on speaking in tongues, based on these verses : "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail: whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:8)

This passage appears to present a loophole for those who do not want to believe in speaking in tongues. Tongues must cease when that which is perfect has come. What is meant by the phrase, "that which is perfect"? They have the answer to that. The phrase "perfect law of liberty" is mentioned in James. They have it now. When the perfect law of liberty comes, then speaking in tongues shall be done away with. "We have the New Testament now, so we don't need the tongues," they declare.

Some consider this their most cogent argument against receiving the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. Is it? We shall examine these scriptures thoroughly. Prophecies shall fail; that is, come to an end. Tongues shall cease; and our imperfect knowledge shall vanish away. All three of these statements are made in consecutive order by Paul. Prophecy, tongues and imperfect knowledge (I know in part) are contrasted by the Apostle to charity, which never ends. We say to those who believe tongues have ceased: "Are you prepared to say also, that prophecy has ended? Are you prepared to say that our imperfect knowledge has vanished? Do you know and understand all things now?" We think not. Much prophecy is left to be fulfilled, and our knowledge in this earthly sphere certainly is still far from perfect. If all three of these statements of Paul are fulfilled "when that which is perfect is come," then they must be considered together. If the role of prophecy has not ceased, and if our imperfect knowledge is still imperfect, then tongues have not ceased, and that which is perfect has not come.

In this earthly sphere we are sure you will agree that nothing is perfect. The Bible itself was written to prepare us for heaven. Heaven, the abode of just men made perfect. Heaven, where mists are rolled away and we see clearly, when the inequalities of this life are recompensed, where the imperfections of earth are made perfect in His presence. David said, ". . . I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness." Jesus is coming back some day soon for his people. In the Church we can still find many human flaws. In God's Word there are no flaws, but it only goes so far. Much is left unrevealed. But when Christ returns, prophecies will all be fulfilled. Our imper-

fect knowledge will be replaced with heavenly perception. Then, and only then, there shall be no more tongues.

Do you want God's best? We are certain you do. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Lord also said, "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) Finally, the Holy Spirit admonishes us through Paul, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Hebrews 4:1) Test the Scriptures. Prove the validity of our claims. We challenge you to believe God's Word and accept heaven's best: The baptism of the Holy Spirit.

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