

Holy Spirit

By Frazier Conley

Vol. 122, No. 4

*...we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given
(Acts 19:2 ASV)*

What is the object or goal of the following discussion, what is the subject? The subject is, "Holy Spirit baptism." Why does it come up for discussion? It is a New Testament phrase about which conflicting ideas are expressed – and because it is a good starting point for understanding the whole doctrine of the Spirit.

The following is a complete list of the passages where the phrase is used:

- Matthew 3:11: "I indeed 'baptize you in 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 in the Holy Spirit and in fire:"
- Mark 1:8: "I baptized you in water; but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit."
- Luke 3:16: "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water, but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and (in) fire."
- John 1:33: "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me. Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit."
- Acts 1:5: "For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence."
- Acts 11:16: "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit."

Some would add 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit." Later, however, I will show that this passage does not belong in the list, at least not as it is usually interpreted.

What are some of the diverse ideas Bible students have when they speak of being "baptized in the Holy Spirit?" The following list summarizes several of these:

- Some will say that it is the Holy Spirit entering into a person and bringing him "regeneration." It is salvation, as they suppose, that is accomplished.
- Similarly, others hold it is the saving presence or action of the Holy Spirit at baptism – water being the external part of the baptism and the Spirit the internal part. Some of these will teach that the Holy Spirit in baptism is "non-miraculous." Others will say that it sometimes, or always, involves miracle power.
- People who hold the "Pentecostal" viewpoint will affirm that at conversion one receives an indwelling of the Spirit. Then, subsequent to conversion, Christians should seek to receive power from the Holy Spirit. The empowerment must involve speaking in "unknown tongues." This, they say, is Holy Spirit baptism.
- Still others explain that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a special measure of power (the "baptismal" measure), bestowed exclusively on the apostles and the house of Cornelius.

Are any of these correct? The thesis here is that none of them is exactly right. The following statement is Holy Spirit baptism in a nutshell. The remainder of the discussion in this book will set forth a defense of the following definition in the context of the larger New Testament theology of the Spirit:

Holy Spirit baptism is that event of the first century in which God gave divine notice to the world of the commencement

of the age of salvation in Christ. He did so by imparting to a large number of people a variety of extraordinary Holy Spirit empowerments, including especially prophetic proclamation. This event was initiated on the day of Pentecost, as depicted in Acts 2. It ceased with the fading of the apostolic period. The manifestations were not only attention getting, but also served to advance and confirm the gospel. Receiving the Holy Spirit in this office though associated with an attitude receptive to the gospel was not the means or the instrument of one's personal salvation; nor was it the Pauline doctrine of the indwelling Spirit; rather, it was simple empowerment.

Here it is suggested that one should not say, "Holy Spirit baptism" but, *the* Holy Spirit baptism." It was a specific event, which had a beginning and an ending.

The Spirit received for empowering proclamation

To confirm the distinction made in Acts between reception of the Holy Spirit and salvation itself, one first needs to look carefully at Luke 4:18-19. There Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

The Messiah receives the Spirit in order to preach or proclaim the good news of salvation, the arrival of the acceptable year of the Lord. He did not receive the Spirit for his own personal sanctification or for imparting the Spirit to others for indwelling sanctification. Throughout the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts the Spirit was received by persons, and then it is specified that the recipients as a result

proclaimed and preached the gospel.’ The gospel of salvation is *proclaimed* through the empowerment of the Spirit. *Salvation* comes when the hearer of the proclamation responds obediently to what is proclaimed.

In this connection one should especially note Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:38-39; and 5:31-32. In Luke 24 forgiveness of sins upon repentance is first mentioned (Luke 24:46-47). Then separately the conferral upon the apostles empowering them for preaching is noted (Luke 24:48-49). The preaching of salvation by the Spirit is not the salvation. The same order and distinction is in Acts 2:38-39. Peter first proclaims repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins. Then he mentions the reception of the Spirit – a reception that in Luke’s gospel and the book of Acts, time and again, is an empowerment for proclamation. In Acts 5:30-32 first there is the proclamation of the gospel, the promise of repentance, and the forgiveness based thereon. Second, there is the mention of the Spirit who empowers testimony. The role of the Spirit is to empower the proclamation, not to indwell directly and sanctify by his presence, as described in Paul’s letters. The forgiveness or salvation comes when the gospel is preached and the correct response follows – repentance and baptism. In summary, one (a) learns about the salvation from preaching inspired by the Spirit: (b) and one responds to the preaching and obtains forgiveness by a penitent baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. The two matters are not identical.

As noted, among the powers bestowed during the period of the Holy Spirit baptism was the gift of inspiration, prophetic utterance. Inspiration was a special empowerment, although *it* was not technically “miraculous.” Nevertheless miracles, manifestations, predictions, and tongues usually accompanied inspiration, which authenticated the inspiration.

How conferred?

If the baptism in the Holy Spirit consisted of a widespread bestowal of special Holy Spirit powers conferred upon the inaugural generation of the church, how was the power imparted? Certain principles, set forth especially in Acts, arise from the New Testament description.

It will be shown that:

(1) the extraordinary empowerment was conferred *directly* (without apostolic hands) only upon the twelve at Pentecost, and the house of Cornelius;

(2) through apostolic hands alone was such power conferred to others (Cornelius received the “same” gift as the apostles so far as the manner of reception – direct from heaven – but not the measure of power given to the apostolic office, which included the ability to confer gifts of the Holy Spirit to others by laying on of hands);

(3) the power necessarily ceased with the apostolic age; and (very important);

(4) the reception of such power was only indirectly related to individual personal salvation.

Basic facts.

Here are some basic facts about Holy Spirit baptism. As noted, the expression “baptize in the Holy Spirit” or its verbal equivalent occurs only six times in scripture (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16). Acts has the most to say about it – the expression itself however occurs in Acts only in quotations from Jesus. The author of Acts, in his own usage, wanted to reserve the word *baptize* for (water) immersion. Instead, Luke speaks of the Holy Spirit baptism typically by such phrases as “filled with the Spirit.”

The first reference in Acts states:

...he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which said he, ye heard from me: For John in. deed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence... you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:4-5, 8).

Note the following facts from these verses:

(1)The baptism in the Holy Spirit was “the promise of the Father.”

(2) It would occur, for the apostles, within a few days.

(3)This event would bring to its recipients an empowerment for witness.

The preamble to Acts 1 is Luke 24:36-53, “And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Note again that “the promise of the Father” (the Holy Spirit baptism) would include “power from on high.”

With reference to the apostles (others would receive empowerment in due time), the “promise of the Father” was plainly kept on the day of Pentecost, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit from heaven (Acts 2:1-13). They were empowered to speak in tongues. The whole event was accompanied by a sound from heaven like wind (which filled the entire chamber); and flames in appearance like fire, resting on each of them. Peter explains in Acts 2:33 that the Father had imparted the promised Holy Spirit to Jesus, and that Jesus then “poured out” upon the apostles that which had been seen and heard. This was the event which empowered the apostolic witness (see Acts 1:8).

When Peter began his sermon in Acts 2, he said:

... but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of my spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, that great and notable day. And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:16-21).

There is no ambiguity in Peter's introduction: "This is that." The event which had just been witnessed: the sound, the fire-like phenomenon, and the languages were the fulfillment (or the inauguration of the fulfillment) of the prophecy found in Joel.

We pointed out that the prophecy of Joel is the "promise of God" – the promised "pouring out" of his Spirit. Therefore, when John the baptist spoke of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and when Jesus is quoted in Acts 1:5; 11:16. The reference is to the prophecy of Joel in chapter 2:28-32. Clearly, if anyone is to understand the baptism in the Holy Spirit, he must understand Joel's prophecy.

Summary

In Acts the following are related or correlated: (1) the baptism in the Holy Spirit. (2) the promise of the Father, (3) the coming of the Holy Spirit, (4) the reception of power from on high, and (5) the events of Acts 2:1-4. This included (6) being filled with the Spirit, (7) the sound that filled the

house. (8) the fire- like flames. (9) the empowerment to speak in tongues, (10) the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, and thus, (11) the pouring out of God's Spirit.

John the baptist declared that he baptized with water, but the Lord would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Did John affirm that water baptism replaces Spirit baptism? Many Bible students take it this way. However, it is quite indisputable that Jesus ordained water baptism for his church (Acts 8:36-39; 10:47-48; 22:16; Eph. 5:26; et al.).

Please note carefully (it is frequently overlooked) that the word *baptizo*, when used literally and without any specification of a medium, has inherent in it the element of water (Oepke, *TDNT* 1:539; and see most Greek lexicons). *Baptizo* should therefore, in many passages, be rendered "immerse in water" and resurrected to a new life. By definition in such passages it cannot be understood to refer to a baptism "in Spirit." It is clear that John was not teaching that Jesus was going replace water baptism with Spirit baptism.

Since the elements of the two baptisms are not the point of contrast, what is? The comparison is rather John's ministry, his preparation for the kingdom, versus its later inauguration with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. John's ministry could not claim the fulfillment of Joel 2. His ministry was a baptism of water only, looking forward to the coming of Christ. Christ, in the new age, not only authorizes a water baptism, but at the inaugural he confers an overwhelming of the Holy Spirit on the infant church.

John's ministry (thus his baptism) was preparatory; Jesus' ministry (including the baptizing in the Holy Spirit), in contrast, was the consummation. From another perspective (looking toward the future), Jesus' ministry, with its culmination on the day of Pentecost, was initiatory.

¹One should notice John the Baptist (Luke 1:14-17); Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45); Zechariah (Luke 1:67-79); Simeon (Luke 2:25-35); Jesus (Luke 4:14-15, cf. 16-21; 10:21-22); disciples (Luke 12:12); the Twelve (Acts 1:8; 24ff, cf 2:17ff: 4:8ff, 31: 10:19ff, 34ff; 11:12, 14); Stephen (Acts 6:5, 8-10ff; 7:1ff, cf. 7:51); Philip (8:29ff; Paul (Acts 9:17, 20); the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2, 4ff); and the Ephesian 12 (Acts 19:6). Other Luke-Acts material could be cited which suggest something similar.