

The Message of Acts #4: The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

In previous lessons we looked at the recurring themes of the book of Acts, as, the Name of Jesus, His Resurrection, and the Kingdom of God. Now we will see what it says about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Note: When referring to receiving “it”, we mean the experience itself, not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a “he”, not an “it”.

The purpose of this message is to explain the Baptism so you will understand what it is, that you will be convinced that it is a valid scriptural experience received after salvation, that it is intended for all believers, and that you can and will receive it in confidence. At the end there will be an opportunity either to become a Christian, or to receive the Baptism. No pressure will be exerted to get you to do something you don't want to do, or are afraid of.

What is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit? It is an experience recorded throughout the book Acts, but let's go back a bit:

- John the Baptist said it would come. Mt. 3:11 – “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.**”
- Jesus told his disciples that he would send the Spirit after his death and his return to the Father.
 - John 14:16-17 – And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; for **he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.**
 - 14:26 – But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and **bring all things to your remembrance**, whatsoever I have said unto you.
 - 15:26-27 – But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, **he shall testify of me.**
 - 16:13 – Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will **guide you into all truth**: for he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and **he will shew you things to come.** He **shall glorify me**; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.
- Jesus told his disciples that they were to wait for it.
 - Lk. 24:49 – And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but **tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.**
 - Ac. 1:4-5, 8 – And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; **but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost** not many days hence. ... **But ye shall receive power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: **and ye shall be witnesses unto me** both in Jerusalem. and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
- Eph. 1:13-14 – In whom also **after that ye believed**, ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise, which is **the earnest of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

So what is the purpose of the Baptism?

- As an indwelling of the Spirit (not just a temporary empowerment)
- To remind us of Jesus' words and teachings
- To guide us into truth
- To show us things to come
- To glorify Jesus
- For power to be witnesses of Jesus to the world
- As a seal of God's ownership of us
- As the earnest of our eternal inheritance

What happened then? After his instructions in Ac. 1:4-8, Christ literally ascended up into heaven. They returned to Jerusalem and proceeded to wait for about ten days. Ac. 2:1-39 (the day of Pentecost) – together in one accord, rushing mighty wind, cloven tongues of fire resting on them, speaking in tongues (languages other than their native tongue). Peter was emboldened to preach to the onlookers, quoting the book of Joel.

Now if it ended there, we might be justified to think that that was the complete fulfillment of the promise, as the Holy Spirit had come to the church. But the people responded in 2:37 “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” and Peter answered “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. **For 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.” It was not just for the 120, and not just for those who responded that day to Peter’s invitation, but also for people “afar off” (obviously future), and in fact for ALL “the called” (all Christians).

Where else can we look to learn about it?

Ac. 4: 29-31 – (Peter and John were released and went “to their own company”) They prayed for boldness to speak the Word, and that God would stretch forth his hand to heal and do signs and wonders. Then the place was shaken, **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit**. This was not the Baptism, because they had already received, but it was a temporary move of the Spirit among them all, encouraging and motivating them to speak the Word with boldness. (Just because you have already received doesn’t mean God cannot move in and “shake things up”!)

Ac. 5:32 – “And we are witnesses of these things, and so is also **the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.**” Obviously we don’t “earn” the Holy Spirit by obedience, but it is the obedient who receive. Part of that obedience is simply the willingness to wait to receive the Spirit before charging off half-cocked.

Ac. 8:5-13 – Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached with great success. The people believed and were baptized (in water) 8:14-20 – When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John, who prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. It specifically says that they had NOT yet received, even though they had been water-baptized. They laid hands on the believers, and they received the Holy Ghost. Simon the sorcerer saw what happened and tried to buy the power to impart the Holy Spirit to people.

Ac. 9:17 – Ananias prayed for Saul “that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”

Ac. 10:44-48- Peter preached to Cornelius’ household, and while he spoke, “the Holy Ghost fell upon them which heard the word ... on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.” 11:15-17 – “And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost began to fall on them, as on us at the beginning.”

Ac. 19:1-6 – This is now a long time after the initial outpouring (20 years?). Paul found “disciples” at Ephesus, and asked them “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” They knew nothing of that, or even Jesus, because they had only been baptized by John the Baptist. Then Paul explained the gospel, and they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.”

How did people receive it in Acts? How did they know they had received ? What evidence was there?

- Ac. 2 – rushing mighty wind, cloven tongues of fire, speaking in other tongues
- Ac. 8 - Peter and John laid hands on them and they received. While it gives no other report of what happened, it is significant that it was something so pronounced and obvious, that Simon attempted to buy the power to do the same. He had already seen miracles and healings and deliverance from unclean spirits (8:6-7), yet it was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that prompted him. So whatever happened, it was externally obvious and quite powerful.
- Ac. 9 – Ananias prayed that Saul (later Paul) would be filled with the Spirit. Again, no other details are given, but we know later that Paul said “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all.” (1 Cor. 14:18)
- Ac. 10 – Cornelius and his household “spoke with tongues and glorified God”
- Ac. 19 – the disciples in Ephesus “spake with tongues, and prophesied”.

So what can we observe from these references?

1. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit always occurred AFTER salvation (although for Cornelius it was practically at the same time). Ac. 19 - “**Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?**” Eph. 1:13 – “In whom also **after that ye believed**, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise
2. It generally, but not always, occurred through the laying on of hands by someone who had previously received (Peter, John, Ananias, Paul).
3. There were occasionally external signs (wind, fire, shaking), but the common evidence was the ability to speak in tongues. Even in Ac. 8 and 9, where tongues are not specified, it is reasonable to think they occurred.
4. The experience was not just a one-time happening, but was repeated over many years, and was stated by Peter to be open to “all that are afar off”.

Clarification on tongues as the evidence of the Baptism vs. the gift of tongues

Many people stumble because they do not recognize the difference. The speaking in tongues as evidence of the Baptism in Acts was never interpreted by someone with the gift of interpretation of tongues. In Acts 2, the understanding was by unbelievers, who were in town from all over the Roman world, for Pentecost. They didn't need interpretation, because some of the people were speaking in their own native tongues.

No interpretation was (is) necessary, because the words are not being spoken for man, but to God. On the other hand, the gift of tongues is exercised for the edification of the church, and should be accompanied by an interpretation. The gifts of tongues/interpretation are God speaking to us. Prayer in the Spirit is directed to God.

This ability to speak in tongues is not a one-time experience when you receive. You can and should continue to do so, by praying or singing "in the Spirit". 1 Cor. 14:15. Jude 20 – "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."

Hindrances to receiving:

1. Ignorance – you can live your whole life in some churches and never know there is such an experience.
2. Past teachings against it or oppositions of religious people or organizations.
 - a. "That was only for the early church to get started. Now we don't need it."
 - b. "It was done away when the NT was written." (1 Cor. 13) Yet they would acknowledge that we STILL "see through a glass darkly." The contrast is not between having and not having a written NT, but between life in this world and in the next. There will be no need of tongues or prophecy in heaven.
 - c. "Tongues are of the devil." Better be careful – that is much too close to blasphemy of the Spirit!
 - d. "There have been counterfeit tongues." Yes, I suppose there have been, but you don't stop using real money just because counterfeiters exist.
 - e. "That is just fanaticism, and is scary". Did Peter sound like a religious loony on the day of Pentecost? Tongues doesn't turn you into a crazy person, or put you into a robotic trance.
 - f. "That was only back then. Those things just don't happen any more."
 - i. Where does the Bible say that? It nowhere says or even implies that it will pass away, before Christ returns.
 - ii. None of the purposes of the Baptism have changed.
 - iii. Not only that, but there have been recorded instances of it through church history, and especially in the last 110 years, with a great Pentecostal outpouring throughout the world. There are whole books about it, testimonies of it, whole churches that have experienced it. There is absolutely no reason to deny its existence, except religious fear.
3. Thinking that you receive the Holy Spirit automatically and unknowingly when you receive Christ. This is generally the excuse of those who want the Baptism, but "without tongues". Are you too good or too proud to receive what God gives?
4. Doubt – "I want it but it will never happen to me." Hopefully what has been said above will have helped to dispel such thoughts.

How can you receive?

1. Base your faith on the Word alone, not merely on desire or someone else's testimony.
2. It must be an intense desire with complete willingness to receive on God's terms. If you still have doubts or fears of the experience, or you just wish this was over so you can go home and do something else, you are NOT ready. Asking before you are really ready to receive just tends to harden your heart against it in the future.
3. If possible find someone to lay hands on you. This is not absolutely necessary, and by no means should it be done by someone who has not themselves received, or who entertains their own doubts on the subject. But if you are at home listening to this video, or you just aren't convinced yet, you should realize that many have received all by themselves, simply because they believe and they ask God in faith.
4. Ask. Lk. 11:9-13 – "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you. ...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?"**
5. Believe it, thank God for it, and act on it. Determine to speak whatever God gives. He will not grab on to your tongue and force you to speak.