

2

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

Pentecostals and Charismatics often tie speaking in tongues with the so-called "Baptism of the Holy Ghost." Speaking in tongues is thought to be the evidence that a person has received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This is not the same as salvation but an experience that comes sometime after a person has been saved. It is said to be the time in which a person is filled with the Holy Spirit and speaks in tongues.

Perhaps we should first mention that there is no difference between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost. The Greek *HAGION PNEUMA* is sometime translated Holy Ghost and sometime Holy Spirit. They are exactly the same.

The first mention of this baptism is found in Matthew 3:11 when John the Baptist said, "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."

For a clearer understanding of this passage it might be helpful to look at a couple of the words. The word "baptize" is a transliteration of the Greek word *BAPTIZO* which means to dip; to immerse; to submerge; to wash; and, metaphorically, to be overwhelmed. So, the disciples were to be submerged in something. In this case, the Holy Spirit and fire.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

The preposition “with” in this verse is the Greek *EN* and is equivalent to our English word “in.” John baptized in water and the disciples were to be baptized in the Holy Ghost and fire.

Also notice that it was not the Holy Spirit who was doing the baptizing. Just as John was baptizing in water, so Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire. The term, “Baptism of the Holy Ghost” is incorrect. It is actually the “Baptism in the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus pinpointed the exact time and location when he said in Acts 1:5, “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Not many days later the baptism came. “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 cloven 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)

Just what was this baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire? No one doubts that the Holy Spirit was at work in the world since creation. So, it is evident that the Spirit did not come into the world on the day of Pentecost. He just arrived with a new job to do. Jesus explained exactly what this new work was about:

A BIBLICAL STUDY OF TONGUES

1. He would teach all things (John 14:26)
2. He would bring all of Jesus' teachings to remembrance (John 14:26)
3. He would testify of Jesus (John 15:26)
4. He would reprove the world of sin (John 16:8)
5. He would reprove the world of righteousness (John 16:8)
6. He would reprove the world of judgment (John 16:8)
7. He would guide into truth (John 16:13)
8. He would not speak of Himself (John 16:13)
9. He would show things to come (John 16:13)
10. He would glorify Jesus (John 16:14)
11. He would give power to witness to the whole world (Acts 1:8)

The baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire was the Holy Spirit coming on the church to teach, direct and empower it to do the job Jesus had given it to do, that is, preach the gospel to every creature. On the other side, the Holy Spirit deals with the world to prepare it to receive the Word preached by the church. Jesus' death on the cross would be ineffective if the world could not hear about it! God's plan and purpose for the church was that it would preach this good news to every creature. And, without Divine direction, teaching and power, humans could never get the job done. The Holy Spirit, coming in His new office, gave the church

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

the leadership and power to do just that.

On the day of Pentecost, in Acts chapter 2, the 120 disciples were sitting in the Upper Room. Suddenly a sound came from heaven like a violent wind that filled the room. Then there appeared to them tongues of fire, that sat on each of them.

The word “tongues” used here and in other places in the New Testament is the Greek word *GLOSSA* and has the same meaning as our English word “tongue.” A tongue may mean the organ found inside the mouth, something that looks like a tongue or it may mean a language, depending upon the context.

The idea of “cloven” tongues might make us think of a snake’s tongue. That is not the idea intended here. The word “cloven” is from the Greek word *DIAMERIZO* which means to divide into parts and distribute. This is the only time in the New Testament it is translated “cloven.” It is also translated “divided” and “parted.” For example, in Luke 22:17 Jesus gave the disciples the cup at the last supper and said, “Take this, and DIVIDE it among yourselves.” In Luke 11:17 Jesus said, “Every kingdom DIVIDED against itself is brought to desolation and a house DIVIDED against itself falleth.” In Matthew 27:35, “They PARTED my garments among them.” And, in Acts 2:45 the disciples “sold their possessions and goods, and PARTED them to all men, as every man had need.”

“Tongues of fire” is a common phrase and is not difficult for us to understand. As a fire burns it

A BIBLICAL STUDY OF TONGUES

produces "tongues" that leap upward. These tongues of fire on Pentecost "divided" or "parted" so that they sat upon each of the 120 that were present.

After the tongues of fire sat on each one, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Holy Spirit was part of the baptism but is not one and the same as the baptism. John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit before Pentecost (Luke 1:15). Elisabeth was filled with the Spirit before Pentecost (Luke 1:41). Zecharias was filled with the Spirit before Pentecost (Luke 1:67). If these were filled with the Spirit before Pentecost, the filling of the Holy Spirit and the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire cannot be the same.

People were filled with the Holy Spirit before Pentecost and people were filled with the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, but only Pentecost qualifies as the baptism that John and Jesus spoke of since only on Pentecost was there a baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire. There was no fire before Pentecost and there was no fire after Pentecost and there is no fire in the so-called "Baptism of the Holy Ghost" today!

It will surprise some to learn that speaking in tongues appears only three times in the Book of Acts. In none of the three instances did an individual receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues.

When the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, they began to speak with other

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

tongues. As has already been pointed out, the word tongue, according to this context, means a language. As a matter of fact, from Acts 2:8-11, it appears that they spoke at least fifteen different languages that day. This could not have been some sort of unintelligible jibberish because, according to verse 8, they heard and understood the gospel preached in their native languages.

The fact that the disciples spoke in tongues was the least important thing that happened on Pentecost. The ability to speak foreign languages that they had never studied was only a means to the end of preaching the gospel to a lot of people who would otherwise not have listened. The important thing about Pentecost was that the church was given the leadership and power to boldly proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a result, three thousand souls were added to them! When a man is filled with the Holy Spirit today, the important thing is that he has the leadership and power to boldly proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ and souls are saved.