

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPEAKING IN TONGUES

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Most of the confusion about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, no matter what theological position one holds, whether charismatic, liberal or conservative, is centered on human testimony. Too much attention is given to what people *say* and *feel* rather than to what the Bible *teaches*.

There are several basic errors that we have inherited from the Calvinists. The Protestant method of interpreting Scripture has, for the most part, looked at the New Testament through Gentile eyes looking backward, from our point of view in time. We tend to look at the Day of Pentecost as the beginning of something, which it was. It was on the Day of Pentecost that the conditions of the New Covenant were laid down. If we look at it through Jewish eyes it was not so much a beginning of something as it was the end of something. It was the end of the Old Covenant. There would be no more sacrifices, no more special status as God's only people, and no more of the old religious system. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was the prelude to the announcement of the terms of the New Covenant that replaced the Old. What was its' significance?

Pre-Pentecost Prediction

The first time we hear of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is in Matthew 3:5-12:

Then Jerusalem was going out to him (John the immerser), and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.¹

¹All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

The axe being at the root of the tree referred to national judgement upon Israel² as does the cleaning of the threshing floor. Right in the middle of these two allusions to national judgement, we see the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The fire does not refer to Hell³, for that cannot make sense in the context of this passage. It does refer however, to the national judgement of Israel that occurred in 70 A.D. when Rome, under the leadership of Titus laid siege to Jerusalem, roughly forty years after John's prediction. Right in between the axe and the winnowing fork lies the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Keep in mind that the first time we are introduced to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit here in Matthew, it is in the context of judgement; and even then, it is told to the unbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees, not to believers. If that were the only reference to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, it is doubtful that so many people in the religious world would be desiring a modern day Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Establishing Apostles?

In some circles it is taught that the purpose of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was to establish the apostles as apostles. However, if we look at John 20:21ff, we see that Jesus set them apart for their special work before the Baptism of the Holy Spirit ever occurred:

Jesus therefore said to them again (the ten, Thomas was absent), "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The apostles had already received their special ordination before the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said He was sending them in the same manner that the Father had sent Him. That gives the apostles certain authority and responsibilities that no one else ever had or can ever have. When Jesus breathed on them He was using the method an ancient king would use sending out his ambassadors, in that the one breathed upon represented the person and authority of the king. Paul was referring to this authority when he wrote in II Corinthians 5:20 "Therefore, we ("we" meaning he and the other apostles) are ambassadors for Christ . . ." The apostles were given their special authority BEFORE the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, therefore the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was NOT to establish the apostolate.

To Whom did the Baptism fall?

We find the Baptism of the Holy Spirit first occurring on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two. The first thing we must establish in Acts 2 is upon WHO did the Baptism of the Holy Spirit fall? Acts 2:1 says, "And when the Day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." The question is, who are "they"? In Acts 1:15 we read about a gathering of 120 people, and some wish to say that the 120 are "they," but this breaks the rules of both Greek and English. When you have a pronoun such as "they" it should most always refer to the last noun mentioned. If we read the last verse of chapter one

²Rome was the axe John refers to in Matthew. In Isaiah 10:34, Assyria was the axe. Also see Jeremiah 46:22.

³Judgement by God is spoken of as fire is common: Deut. 32:19ff; Is. 33:13ff; Jer. 23:29; Amos 1:4ff; and Mal. 3:2

we read, "And they (the 120) drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." The "they" of Acts 2:1 then, refers, not to the 120, but to Matthias and the eleven apostles. On the Day of Pentecost all twelve apostles gathered in one place.

And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. ⁴

Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?" Acts 2:2-8

The statement that most succinctly tells us it was only the twelve is in verse 7. The 120 were certainly not all Galileans.

Judgement is coming!

The passage goes on to say that Peter and the eleven others, after being accused of being drunk, got up and began to preach. They began to preach in response to the question put before them in verse 12: "What does this mean?"

Peter begins his sermon by quoting a passage from Joel that is pronouncing judgement upon national Israel. Verses 19 & 20 of Acts chapter 2 read:

And I will grant wonders in the sky 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 great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.

Peter is quoting from Joel 2:28-32. He is not talking about some end-time event. He is answering the question "what does this mean?" This kind of language is somewhat common in Scripture and it always refers to judgement being brought upon a nation by God. Jesus used similar language in Matthew 24:29ff referring to the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in 70 A.D. (which is what Peter, here in Acts 2, also refers). This kind of language is found in Isaiah 13:10 in which Babylon is the one being judged. In Isaiah 34:4 & 5, Idumea is being judged and in Ezekiel 32:7 & 8 Egypt is being judged and the judgement spoken of is in this very kind of language.

In Matthew 3 the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is in the context of national judgement upon Israel, and

⁴The Mosaic covenant began with similar signs. In Exodus 19:16ff we see fire, loud noises, and earthquakes all being used by God to begin the covenant that was ending in Acts 2. Not only does the beginning of the New Covenant occur at Pentecost, but also the end of the Old Covenant.

in Acts 2 our context has not changed. They were about to be judged for the death of the Messiah and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was the sign in which God used to convey this message of pending judgement and that the New Covenant was beginning. In verse 40 Peter exhorts them to "Be saved from this perverse generation!" Evidently they got the message for they asked in verse 37 "what must we do?" and Peter laid down the requirements of the New Covenant in verse 38.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was NOT to empower the apostles. It was NOT to give miraculous gifts to believers. It was NOT a recurring event as we will see below. It WAS a sign of judgement upon the Jewish nation for the ultimate national sin: the murder of the Son of God.

The Other Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred on the Day of Pentecost but the Scriptures record it happening one other time. We read of that second time in Acts 10:44ff in the household of a Gentile named Cornelius:

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

We need to realize that this event took place about ten years after Pentecost. After ten years the Church, with very few exceptions, was all Jewish. Whereas the Baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a sign of judgement against the Jewish nation, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit at the household of Cornelius was a sign of judgement against the Jewish Church. This is exactly how Peter recounts the event to the Jerusalem Church in Acts 11:15ff:

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning. "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' "If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" And when they heard this, they quieted down, and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

Notice the surprise of the Jerusalem Church. Gentiles, uncircumcised Gentiles no less, could be a part of the Church. It took an act of judgement that they had not seen since the first day of the Church⁵ to make them realize their neglect of obeying Christ's commission to preach the Gospel to all the world.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 was a judgement against the Jewish nation. The Baptism of

⁵ v. 15 "the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as upon us at the beginning"

the Holy Spirit in Acts 10 was a judgement against the Jewish Church. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred only TWICE in all of history. Approximately 30 years later Jerusalem was destroyed and the Church was forced to spread out among the Gentiles⁶.

Peter did NOT tell about what a great blessing it was to receive again the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Instead he told of it as a rebuke against the Jewish Church.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was a sign of judgement upon the Jewish nation and then against the Jewish Church. Once that judgement took place, the sign was not needed nor used.

Speaking in Tongues

What about Speaking in "Tongues?" What is it? What does it mean? How was it done? Is it still with us today? Why was it started? These are all good questions that will be answered if we are to understand what the Bible says about it.

There is a wide difference of opinion on the subject. To some it is an "ecstatic utterance" that is only intelligible to God. Some claim it as a "prayer language." Others say it was actual earthly languages that people understood and that it stopped long ago with the death of the apostles.

There is much confusion, it seems, on the topic of speaking in tongues, and since God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33) we should be able to come to a clear understanding of "tongues." I believe we can, but it will probably not be the popular opinion found in best-selling books or televised religious programming. Truth seldom is.

To answer the first question: What is it? is not a difficult thing to do. The first occurrence of "Speaking in Tongues" is on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. In verse 4 we read, "And they (the twelve apostles) were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit was giving them utterance." Okay, that tells us it happened, but it still doesn't tell us what it was. We need to keep reading, however. Luke, goes on to tell us that there were Jews in Jerusalem from all parts of the world (vv. 5-11).

From the comments of these people from around the world we know exactly what it means to be speaking in tongues. Acts 2:7-8:

And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear them in our own language to which we were born?"

Speaking in tongues was to speak in human languages that were understandable, at least to those who spoke the language of the tongues' speaker.

We also know that speaking in tongues was not for communication. If the apostles simply wanted to communicate, all they had to do was to speak Greek. It was a time when the world was bi-lingual. One would know his native tongue as well as Greek.

⁶The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was NOT redemptive, it was evidential. Ephesians 4 teaches that there is only one baptism. If someone insists that there is more than one baptism, one must also insist upon more than one Lord, more than one faith and more than one God, thus making Eph. 4 a falsehood in Scripture. Notice that even after the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the household of Cornelius was immersed to be Christian.

It is not a simple coincidence that the first occurrence of speaking in tongues took place immediately after the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was a sign of judgement upon the Jewish nation, so it seems logical and rational to think that speaking in tongues was associated with the judgement of the Jewish nation, at least in some fashion.

The next time we read of anyone speaking in tongues is when the Baptism of the Holy Spirit fell upon the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:46). As we have seen, this too was a sign of judgement to the Jewish Church.

The only other time we read about speaking in tongues in the book of Acts is in chapter 19, verse 6. Paul had found some disciples of John (the immerser) and taught them about Jesus. He baptized them and laid his hands upon them. This is when the disciples of John began to speak in tongues. Notice that for someone, other than an apostle, to speak in tongues the hands of an apostle were to be laid upon him; just like all the other miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

Outside of the book of Acts, the ONLY place we read of speaking in tongues is First Corinthians chapters 12-14. It is interesting that with a subject that is so important to so many in the modern religious world, it is barely mentioned in the Scriptures.

Chapter 12 of I Corinthians mentions tongues but Paul doesn't really deal with it there. We need to start in chapter 13 verses 8-13:

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Notice that prophecy and knowledge will be done away. The Greek word for "done away" has the idea here that something will be done away in order to be replaced with something better, such as a house being torn down to build a mansion. It is the same word used in verse 11 when Paul mentions doing away with childish things to be replaced by adult things. Tongues however, will just cease to exist. They were not to be replaced. Prophecy, knowledge and speaking in tongues were all imperfect, partial and incomplete. They would be done away when the "perfect" comes.

We need to take a moment on this word "perfect." The Greek language has three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. This word is in the neuter, meaning that the "perfect" is a *thing* or an *it*. The word also means "complete" just as a jigsaw puzzle is perfect or complete when finished. Some would hold that when Paul uses the word "perfect" he is referring to the second coming of Jesus. This cannot be for Paul would not refer to Jesus as a thing or an it. Also, verse 13 makes no sense whatsoever if we are to believe the perfect is the second coming. For when the perfect thing comes, these will abide: faith, hope, and love. Faith will be sight at the second coming. Hope will be fulfilled at the second coming because "hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees?" (Rom. 8:24). When the perfect thing comes, faith, hope, and love will abide. The perfect thing was the written New Testament that was in the process of being completed even as Paul wrote.

Understanding this will help us understand speaking in tongues.

It is in I Corinthians 14 that we really see the judgmental element of tongues-speaking. Verse 2 reads:

For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.

This is what the Corinthians were doing. Paul is not telling them that this is what happens when one speaks in tongues; this is what was happening already at Corinth and Paul reprimanded them for it. All gifts, whether miraculous or not, are to be used for the edification of the Church (v. 12). The manner in which the Corinthians were using their gift was not edifying the Church, which is why Paul says in verse 4: "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church." Speaking in tongues was of no profit to the church for no one was understanding what was being said. Thus Paul gives the analogies of verses 7,8 & 9:

Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

If no one interprets, no one knows what is being said, therefore you are just speaking into the air and no one is being edified. Evidently there were some claiming to pray in tongues, which Paul points out is a rather silly idea (vv. 13-17):

Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also. Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.

Why would someone pray in a tongue? Paul commands them to understand what they are saying. One might pray in tongues having the right spirit or attitude, but their mind is left out for without an interpreter, no one knew what was being said, and if that's the case, how can anyone say "Amen"? One might have the right attitude but no one is being edified.

In chapter 14 we have four basic rules for tongue speaking: (1) Only two may speak, three at the most (v. 27), (2) Speaking was to be in turn, not all at once (v. 27), (3) It must be translated or else not spoken at all (vv. 27,28), and (4) women are not to speak (v. 34).

So far in chapter 14 we've seen how tongues were supposed to be used and how the Corinthians abused this gift but we have yet to see a judgmental aspect to speaking in tongues.

In verse 21 it reads: "In the Law it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers

I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to me,' says the Lord." This is a quotation of Isaiah 28:11. As we turn back to Isaiah 28 lets' begin with verse 9:

To whom would He teach knowledge? And to whom would He interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast? For He says *'Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there.* Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, He who said to them "Here is rest, give rest to the weary," and, "Here is repose," but they would not listen. So the word of the Lord to them will be *'Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here a little there,"* that they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive. Therefore hear the word of the Lord, O scoffers, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have made a pact. The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by, for we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception.

The words in italics should not be translated. The words in Hebrew read "Sav lasav, sav lasav, kav lakav, Kav lakav, Ze'er sham, ze'er sham." These are sounds imitating the sounds a baby would make. The English equivalent would be "goo goo gah gah." God is telling Israel that because they would not listen to His commands, He would use people of stammering lips and a foreign tongue to proclaim His message of judgement. Those with the stammering lips, i.e., a foreign tongue, were the Assyrians and God used them to bring judgement upon Israel.

When the Baptism of the Holy Spirit took place, it was not in Hebrew that the terms of the new covenant were spoken, it was through about every other language except Hebrew (Acts 2:5-11). Just as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was a sign of judgement upon national Israel, speaking in tongues was a constant reminder that (1) the new covenant was for all, not only for the fleshly descendants of Abraham and (2) judgement is coming upon national Israel.

Paul then says in verse 22: "So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe." Who were the unbelievers? Primarily the Jews. Signs were always for unbelievers (Acts 8:6; 14:1-3; Heb. 2:1-4).

In 70 A.D. God brought forth His judgments against Israel by using Rome to come and utterly destroy the city of Jerusalem. Israel had committed the ultimate national sin: They crucified the Son of God. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit as well as the gift of speaking in tongues were a call to repentance for the nation Israel. When Jerusalem fell there was no longer a need for this sign of judgement therefore it simply ceased to exist just as Paul said it would in I Cor. 13:8.

Many have claimed that the gift of tongues is still with us today. This is a serious claim that redefines what the Holy Scriptures have to say about tongues. What is called "Tongues" today has little resemblance to the Biblical record for it is either ecstatic gibberish or some kind of secret prayer language. Everyone from voodoo witch doctors to charismatic preachers claim this gift, but they make the claim that it is some kind of heavenly or spiritual language that men cannot understand. Some of these people love the Lord and are very sincere, others are not. However, sincerity has never been the barometer of truth. Whatever the case may be, these modern day claims are NOT what the Bible calls speaking in tongues.