

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

In a high school hall: "Sounds spooky to me" whispered one teenager to another. They crowded closer to hear what was being said. An interested group of high school students had surrounded a classmate, who was testifying about an experience he had received, which he termed the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." I've heard my grandfather talk about that, one of the boys remarked. A girl injected, My Sunday school teacher read something about that in the lesson last Sunday, but he couldn't explain it. Tell us more Bob!

In a factory: Ted, have you noticed Jim? The last couple of days he seems so different. I believe he's really changed. What happened? He was telling some guys in shipping yesterday about a "baptism of the Holy Ghost" or something. Probably got mixed up with some religious cult! I don't think so. He started attending that nice new church on second Street, and apparently what he has is real. He doesn't curse like he did before, and I haven't seen him smoke a cigarette in days. Aw, forget it! Hard to do when it happens right before your eyes We ALL need something like that!

In a church: Sarah, did you hear about some of our members having cottage prayer meetings? No, but what's wrong with that? Well, nothing really. But several of them say they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoken with other tongues. Our church doesn't believe in that, does it? Well, I've been reading some magazine articles and books about people receiving such an experience. Why don't you and I go to one of these Bible studies and learn more about this? Frankly, I'm interested. These conversations are typical of thousands being carried on right now. Since God is pouring out His Spirit now in a greater measure than at any time since the days of the Apostles, there is much discussion on this Christian experience. What is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? To define the terms, **baptism** means "immersion or complete covering by, as to be engulfed by." The Holy Spirit is God Himself. Just the thought of being engulfed with God is enough to thrill any heart! The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the same as being "filled with the Holy Spirit. These terms are used synonymously in Acts 1:5 and 2:4.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a scriptural experience. Jesus referred to it several times during His ministry. In John 7:37-39 we read, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying,

If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

In John 3:5 Jesus declared, "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Before His ascension, Christ told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem "for the promise of the Father; which, saith He, ye have heard of Me...Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (Acts 1:4,5) About ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon 120 obedient disciples who were gathered together in an upper room in Jerusalem. The twelve apostles and MARY, the mother of Jesus, were among this number.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:4) This phenomenon and the powerful message of the Apostle Peter resulted in the conversion of 3,000 more the same day!

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In Acts 8:14-17 We read that the Samaritans were filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:44-48 tells us that the household of an Italian named Cornelius received this wonderful experience of speaking with other tongues as they were filled with the Spirit.

Twelve disciples of John the Baptist were converted in Acts 19:1-6, being rebaptized in the Name of Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. They too, spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This experience was a powerful force in the lives of the early Christians. Being born again of the Spirit, they entered into a new spiritual realm of life. The Spirit empowered them for witnessing, comforted them in trials, and enriched their daily lives with blessings. The fruit of the Spirit was manifest as the Spirit cultivated in their lives the Christian virtues mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23.

But today? The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an experience offered throughout this present age. In the last century many millions of people have received the Holy Spirit. This has happened in churches, in homes, on trains, in autos, and anywhere a repentant heart has looked up to God in faith.

People from all walks of life and all religious convictions have proved the promise of the Scripture in Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, 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."

What about you? "Whosoever will" is the language of the Scripture. All who will surrender to the terms of the gospel may receive this vital experience with God! Don't settle for less! Forget about denominational dogmas, and study your Bible concerning this experience. Then find a church that preaches the full gospel, where the Holy Ghost is being received. Open your heart to Christ and let Him be real to **you**. He wants **you** for a temple of His Holy Spirit!

Revelations 3:20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."

How to receive the Holy Ghost:

Jn 7:38-39 KNOW... it is the will of God for you to receive the Spirit according to the Scriptures!

Acts 2:36-39 REPENT... by determining to turn from sin to God. Then be baptized in the Name of Jesus!

Acts 5:32 OBEY... the Word of God with a willing heart as it is revealed to you day by day!

Luke 11:9-13 ASK... for the Holy Spirit, trusting God will give something good, not something evil!

Mark 11:24 PRAY... earnestly, believing you will receive this glorious gift you desire from God!

Acts 19:1-6 ALLOW... others to pray with you, exercising the practice of "laying on of hands"!

Luke 24:49-53 PRAISE... the Lord with all your heart for the promise of His presence in your life!

Gal. 3:2, 11-14 BELIEVE... you will receive the promise. You cannot earn it by doing good works!

Acts 10:44-48 EXPECT... the Spirit to fall any time, especially when the Word of God is preached!

Acts 2:4 SPEAK... boldly whatever language the Spirit miraculously imparts!

Wouldn't you LOVE this free gift? The Spirit fills you will joy unspeakable and you can live a victorious life!

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