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VF HOLY SPIRIT

No. 1

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

By

LESLIE G. THOMAS

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FOR USE IN TH'S ROOM

Baptism in The Holy Spirit

To
The Friday Night Class

Baptism In The Holy Spirit

Matt. 3:11, 12

Introduction: 1. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a subject that never ceases to be of interest to everyone who is sincerely trying to please the Lord. It is a question over which many battles have been fought; but, unfortunately, not every one has been willing to try, in a cool and calm manner, to learn what the Scriptures teach on this subject. Too many have been concerned with gaining a point or defeating an opponent. The ability to look at both sides of the question will greatly aid one in arriving at the truth on the subject. 2. Since this is still a debatable subject, every one should be willing to admit that some of his views on the question may be erroneous; and with this attitude of mind, an honest effort should be made to weigh any teaching that may be offered in an effort to arrive at the truth regarding this subject. 3. Some men endeavor to stop all investigation respecting everything on which they have pronounced; and, lest they should not be regarded as the end of all wisdom they make an effort to destroy every hypothesis that in any way seems to call in question any position they have taken. But in studying this lesson, let us consider.

I. THE DEFINITION OF TERMS.

1. Any definition that is adequate for the purpose in hand must be characterized by at least two things—viz:

(1) It must be one that is acceptable to any reasonable and fair-minded man.

(2) It must be in harmony with *all* that is taught in the Scriptures on this subject. Unity regarding this question will never be attained until these two things are realized.

2. Another thing to keep in mind in an effort to get the question clearly before us is that Jesus Christ himself is the administrator of Holy Spirit baptism. See John 1:31-33; Matt. 3:11, 12.

3. Then, too, Holy Spirit baptism is not for the fleshly man, but for the spiritual. Cf. John 3:1-12. While there is an analogy between physical and spiritual baptisms, we should remember that Holy Spirit baptism has a spiritual administrator and a spiritual subject; and we are

therefore not to conclude that the baptizing in question was to be done by literally immersing the subject in the Holy Spirit, as is done in the case of the human body in water.

(1) Thus, when different metaphors are used with reference to the impartation of the Spirit ("pour forth," Acts 2:17, 18, 33; "fell," Acts 10:44; 11:15; "poured out," Acts 10:45; "received," Acts 10:47; "baptized," Acts 1:5; 11:16), we are not to understand that different acts were performed; but that each one of these expressions refers to one and the same thing.

(2) If Peter did not refer to baptism in the Holy Spirit when he said, "Being therefore at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear" (Acts 2:33), then it is impossible to tell when the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit; for the expression "baptize," used with reference to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, is not used in the entire second chapter of Acts. The *pouring forth* of the Spirit, then, is equivalent to *baptizing* in the Spirit.

(3) Because the term "pour" is used by religious people to describe an unscriptural form of so-called water baptism, some have difficulty in seeing how the term can be equivalent to "immerse," when used with reference to the Holy Spirit.

a. This is because they endeavor to make the action of spiritual baptism identical with the act of baptizing a physical body in water. But even if these two acts were identical, how do they know how large the spirit is and how much of the Holy Spirit it would take to immerse a human spirit in? The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not to be thought of in this sense.

b. The following news item appeared in *The Chattanooga Times* (1944), under the heading, Mother Corrects Report: SPRINGFIELD, MO., Dec. 10 (AP)—Straight from the Ozarks: The mother of a soldier reported killed in the "European theater" asked a correction because "he did not get killed in a theater."

"He got killed in the firing lines with the U. S. Army in Germany," she declared.

This woman's trouble was in the fact that she tried to make the military use of the term *theater* conform to her idea of a *theater as a place for a show!*

The writer of these notes knows a gospel preacher who, upon one occasion, was taking part in a class discussion, which had under con-

sideration Paul's experience in Ephesus, as recorded in the nineteenth chapter of Acts. In commenting upon the statement found in verses 29-31, this preacher said that he didn't believe that Paul wanted to go into the theater to see the show!

If people will keep clearly in mind the difference in the nature of water and Holy Spirit baptisms, they will have little trouble in seeing the import of the expression "poured forth" or "poured out" when used with reference to the giving of the Holy Spirit.

4. The appropriateness of the metaphor, "baptize in the Holy Spirit," is evidently to be found in a resemblance between this figurative baptism and the literal baptism performed in water, with which it is contrasted, and from which the metaphor is taken.

(1) Water baptism (immersion) involves, as its chief idea, an overwhelming, a sudden and complete overpowering of the person submerged by water, and the entering into conditions and relations wholly new.

(2) In a similar manner, the baptism in the Spirit implies an equally entire subjugation and overmastery of the soul by the Spirit which pervades it, resulting in an immediate and complete change and renovation. The one who receives this blessing is to be "led by the Spirit," is "in the Spirit," and is expected to subject his entire nature to the Spirit's control.

(3) It is in these obvious analogies that the propriety and appropriateness of the figure is seen, and its application understood. Cf. Luke 12:50; Matt. 20:22,23; Mark 10:38. To carry out resemblances too far, or to mistake resemblances for identities, is to run into gross materialistic speculations unwarranted by the Word of God.

(4) It is sufficient to know that *literally* there is no such thing as a "pouring out" of the Spirit, or a "baptism" in the Spirit. These are alike but metaphors, designed, by the resemblances they suggest, to present to the mind, in various aspects and from various points of view, the most lively and correct ideas possible of a fact, which, in whatever form or imagery it may be clothed, *itself always remains the same*, and is simply and unfiguratively the impartation or gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe.

5. To be baptized in the Spirit, then, means that the soul has been entirely subjugated by the Spirit which pervades it; and that a thorough and complete change has been affected, resulting in the entire subordination of the human nature to a new supremacy. See 2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Rom. 6:3, 4.

(1) There is no indication that the "sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind" and the tongues "like as of fire" were a part of or necessary to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, for they were lacking when the identical gift was sent upon the house of Cornelius. Cf. Acts 4:23-31. The word "filled" in 4:31 is the same as that in 2:4.

(2) The speaking with other tongues followed the baptism in the Holy Spirit, both on the day of Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius; but if the ability to speak with tongues was connected with the baptism in the Holy Spirit to the extent that no one who can't speak with tongues is baptized in the Spirit, then what evidence is there which unmistakably declares that *some* of the Corinthians, at least, were not baptized in the Holy Spirit, since they, too, could speak with tongues. Cf. I Cor. 14:5.

(3) Not only could the apostles speak with tongues, but they could also make known the will of God (2 Cor. 5:18, 19), a thing that the house of Cornelius could not do; for Peter had been sent for for that very purpose. However, if we keep the facts clearly in mind we shall be able to see that it was Jesus who baptized the apostles in the Holy Spirit, while the Spirit, after he had been received by the apostles, enabled them to speak with tongues and make known the will of God. See Acts 2:4, 33. *Jesus* "poured forth this, which ye see and hear," while the apostles "begin to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave utterance." Cf. I Cor. 12:4-11.

(4) Instead of saying that the ability to speak with tongues was given to the apostles and the house of Cornelius *as evidence* that they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, it would be nearer the truth to say that the Spirit, after they had been baptized, *gave them the power to convince the unbelievers who were before them that they were speaking the word of God.* See I Cor. 14:22. The multitudes on Pentecost needed to be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, and that the apostles were voicing the testimony of God regarding him; while the unbelieving Jews at the house of Cornelius needed to be convinced that the Gentiles were entitled to the privileges of the gospel through Christ.

II. TO WHOM WAS THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT PROMISED?

1. The testimony of the Scriptures: Matt. 3:11, 12; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:14-21.

(1) Even a cursory reading of Matt. 3:11, 12 will reveal that John's baptism was *an act of obedience* on the part of those who submitted to it; while the baptisms of Jesus *pertained to rewards and punishments.* (It

is here assumed, without stopping to give the proof, that the term *fire* referse to "hell fire." Cf. Matt. 23:33.) The contrast is between the righteous and the wicked; and it is certainly a strange and arbitrary procedure to take out the cognate comparison from between these two, and refuse an equal scope to it—the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the baptism in fire—the fire being for all the wicked, while the baptism in the Holy Spirit is only for two special cases!

a. John's statement in Matt 3:11, 12 was not confined to the group he addressed on the day he made it; but was equally true of all he baptized throughout his entire ministry. Cf. Matt. 28:20b. There were always two classes before John, those who would be saved and those who would not, and he could not always know their hearts when he baptized them; but the Son of God, who would baptize in the Holy Spirit and in fire, would not be deceived; but he would carefully separate them, the one from the other, and would give to each one that which he deserves.

b. It would take a rather wide stretch of the imagination to conclude that John was speaking directly to the twelve apostles and the house of Cornelius, when he said, "He shall baptize *you* in the Holy Spirit."

(2) Peter's quotation of Joel's prophecy does not have the slightest semblance of a special application. Some disposition must be made of "sons and daughters," "servants and handmaidens," etc., in any fair and adequate exegesis of this passage.

2. The only fair conclusion to draw from these premises is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was promised to all obedient believers under Christ. Cf. John 7:37-39; Acts 5:32.

(1) This promise is realized after one comes into Christ, and is in direct conflict with the popular denominational doctrine to the effect that one must receive the Holy Spirit in order for him to become a Christian.* Cf. John 14:16, 17; Gal. 4:6.

(2) This view of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is also diametrically opposed to the popular idea that miraculous powers, such as speaking with tongues, *must always accompany* such a baptism. Cf. 1 Cor. 13:8; and see definition given below.

* We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the Divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel, and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life.—McConnell's Manual for Baptist Churches, p. 19f.

III. WHO RECEIVED THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT?

1. It is admitted by practically all Bible students that the twelve apostles, on the day of Pentecost of Acts 2, and the house of Cornelius (Acts 10 and 11) received this baptism; and there will therefore be no effort made here to prove this.

2. But since the identical language of Acts 2, 10, and 11 (*dorea*, gift; *ekcheo*, pour forth or pour out) is used in Acts 2:38 and Tit. 3:5, 6, where the reference is unmistakably to all obedient believers of the gospel, the conclusion seems to be inevitable that all Christians are the recipients of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

3. As already indicated, the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit as a gift, is one thing, while a gift, such as speaking with tongues, which is bestowed by the Spirit, is something else. One is given by the Lord, while the other is bestowed by the Spirit, after he (the Spirit) had been given by the Lord.

4. When the reference in the New Testament is unmistakably to the gift of the Spirit, as bestowed by the Lord, the word used for "gift" is *dorea*; but when the reference is unmistakably to a gift bestowed by the Spirit, the word used for "gift" is *charisma*.

(1) When the reference is to the Holy Spirit, these words are never confused, that is *dorea* never refers to a gift bestowed by the Spirit, while *charisma* never refers to the Spirit as a gift from the Lord. Cf. Luke 11:13 (*doma*).

(2) The word for gift in Acts 2:38 is *dorea*, and the reference therefore, is to the reception of the Holy Spirit as a gift. Cf. Rom. 8:9. (The grammatical construction of Acts 2:38 in the original—the genitive of identification, *ten dorean tou hagiou pneumatos*—makes it certain that the Holy Spirit as a gift is what is here meant. See Thayer; *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Robertson); *The Expositor's Greek Testament, in loco*. Cf. Acts 8:20; 10:45; John 4:10; 2 Cor. 9:15.)

5. But is the "gift" of the Spirit the same as the "baptismal measure" of the Spirit? Or, to state the matter in other words, isn't there a "baptismal measure" and a "gift measure" of the Spirit referred to in the New Testament? No; such a distinction is neither taught nor implied in the New Testament.

(1) No one under the reign of Christ was ever promised the Holy Spirit, except those who *obey* him. See Acts 5:32; John 14:17. (The

house of Cornelius was a special case for a special purpose. However, the whole context shows that they were submissive to the will of God through Christ both before and after receiving the Spirit.)

(2) When the apostles received the Holy Spirit their souls were entirely subjugated by the Spirit which pervaded them, resulting in the entire subordination of their nature to a new supremacy; and what was true of them is also true of any others who receive the Spirit, for there is no such thing as a person's receiving the Spirit from the Lord who does not thus submit himself to the Lord. But when this is done he is *overwhelmed* by the Spirit; and *that* is a baptism in the Spirit. Cf. Rom. 8:5-14.

(3) During the age of miracles and before the New Testament was written many who had received the Spirit were enabled by him to exercise certain miraculous powers, such as teaching and confirming the word; but even then those powers were not granted to them until after they had received the Spirit as a gift.

(4) After the age of miracles had passed away (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8; Eph. 4:8-16) the Spirit was still given by the Lord as a gift to his people (Acts 2:38); but there is no indication that the Spirit after that age ever enabled any one to exercise any miraculous power. The Spirit is not given for that purpose now, but to comfort us (John 14:16, 17), to help our infirmity (Rom. 8:26, 27), to strengthen us with power in the inner man (Eph. 3:16), and to assist us in bearing the fruit that is well pleasing to God (Gal. 5:16, 22, 23, 25).

IV. SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

1. *Does not Jesus teach in Acts 1:5 that the promise recited by John would be entirely fulfilled when the apostles received the baptism in the Holy Spirit?* There is no indication that he taught that; but if he did, then the promise was not fulfilled in the case of the house of Cornelius. See Acts 11:15-17. If what happened at the house of Cornelius was in fulfillment of what was spoken by John, then his prediction was not *entirely fulfilled* on the day of Pentecost of Acts 2. Furthermore, if only the apostles and those of the house of Cornelius were baptized in the Holy Spirit, then that blessing was never realized by Paul, and yet he was unquestionably the equal of any of the twelve. Cf. Gal. 2:6. There is a vast difference in the promise being fulfilled in the case of the apostles, and *in their case alone*. Cf. Matt. 13:14, 15; John 12:40; Acts 28:25-27. Isaiah's prophecy was not entirely fulfilled in any one instance. It had a similar application whenever and wherever the same conditions were present. A prediction, therefore, can be fulfilled in a given instance

without being fulfilled in that case alone, unless, indeed, the nature of the thing predicted demands that it have only one application, as the prophecy concerning the death of Christ which could have only one specific fulfillment. There was no such limitation surrounding John's prediction in Matt. 3:11, 12.

2. *If the use of the same language (Acts 2, 10, and 11; 2:38; Tit. 5, 6) proves that all Christians receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, would not the same argument prove that people prior to Christ likewise received the baptism in the Holy Spirit? See, for example, Ezk. 39:29; cf. Ezk. 36:25-31; Luke 1:15.* Whatever may be the import of any language or the status of any person, with reference to the Holy Spirit prior to the reign of Christ does not come within the scope of the investigation now before us; for the reference is to the baptism which Christ himself administers. See, again, Matt. 3:11, 12; John 7:37-39. People were immersed in water prior to the reign of Christ (2 Kings 5:14; John 3:23), but no informed person would contend that they received the baptism authorized by Christ. These baptisms belonged to different periods—different dispensations.

3. *"There is . . . one baptism."* (Eph. 4:4, 5.) *How can this be, if water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism are both in effect now?* There is only one baptism that we are commanded to submit to, and that is water baptism. Any one who will read Paul's statement to the Ephesians will readily see that he was writing about the Christian life and the obligation of the Lord's people to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He was not speaking primarily about rewards that come to Christians as a result of their obedience, such as the gift or baptism in the Holy Spirit. No one should ever attempt to make a conclusion embrace more than is certainly comprehended in the premise from which the conclusion is drawn. Heb. 6:1, 2 certainly speaks of more than one baptism; and even if the writer of that letter included in his purview Jewish washings and the baptism of John, he also had in mind the baptisms of Christ (Matt. 3:11), for he was discussing the elementary principles of the *Christian religion*. Therefore, any correct interpretation of Eph 4:5 must take into consideration Heb. 6:1, 2.

4. *How does one know that he is baptized in the Holy Spirit?* In the same way that he knows that he receives the remission of sins, or the "gift" of the Holy Spirit, if that is different from the baptism in the Holy Spirit: he has the word of God for it. If he fulfils the conditions, he knows that the blessing is his.

5. *Does not the Bible teach that we receive the Holy Spirit only through the word?* There is no such language in the New Testament;

and when all the facts in connection with the subject have been considered, it will be found that no necessity exists for drawing such a conclusion. *The Holy Spirit is promised as a gift.* See Acts 2:38; cf. Psa. 51:11. The Holy Spirit was received by people before the New Testament was written; but after it was reduced to writing, those who receive the Spirit are expected to be governed by its teaching, if they would please the Lord and develop spiritually. During the age of miracles the Spirit exercised an influence independent of what is now the New Testament; but since the word has been confirmed and put in writing the influence of the Spirit is exerted only in harmony with the teaching of that Volume. Cf. Rom. 8:2; Gal. 4:6; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

6. *If the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) are one and the same thing, then why change the phraseology of our preaching, since we have for years preached that we receive the "gift" of the Spirit when we obey the gospel?* It is scriptural to say that we receive the *gift* of the Holy Spirit when we obey the gospel, unless we attach a meaning to the word that is different from that which is used in the New Testament. When one says that the gift of the Spirit is not the baptism of the Spirit, he is running counter to the teaching of the New Testament. There is nothing particularly wrong in speaking of the church as the church of Christ, rather than the church of God; but when one begins to say that the church of Christ is not the church of God, he is saying something that the New Testament does not teach.

While this study is not set forth as an exhaustive treatise on the subject now before us, it is claimed, however, that what is contained in this lesson is in harmony with all the facts relating to the question which are found in the New Testament; for it is obvious to any thoughtful student that no theory of the baptism of the Holy Spirit which does not take into consideration every fact which is connected with the question can be correct.

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