

PENTECOSTAL EXPERIENCE: HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE INITIAL PHYSICAL EVIDENCE?

Introduction

The emphasis on the person and the work of the Holy Spirit which we promote is not a new to the Church. The outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was a logical culmination of revealed truth about the Holy Spirit as found through the entire Bible. In Acts 2:17 Peter decisively connects the Pentecost event with the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29).¹

The Israel were unaccustomed to such a universal move of the Spirit in the live of the sons and daughters, old and young, men and women. Only a selected few charismatic prophets, kings, and judges were moved by the Holy Spirit to minister supernaturally and experience the presence of the Spirit as David demonstrates in the Psalms. Peter put the day of Pentecost visitation into perspective as fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and a divinely ordered gift of the Spirit for all believers, not just for leadership offices or specific people.

Biblical theology is a unity based on the entire Bible. It is both progressive and unified because God reveals cumulative truth from Genesis to Revelation. The Old Testament prophesied a coming age of the Spirit. The theme is enlarged in the Spirit-empowered ministry of Jesus. At Pentecost the Spirit comes in power to all God’s people. Yet individual writers emphasize special aspect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Luke’s writings place

¹All Scripture references are quoted from NIV, except stated.

more emphasis on the coming of the Spirit to empower and ministry through the Spirit-filled life. Paul's writings emphasize the Spirit-filled subsequent to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. There is no contradiction between Paul's writings and Luke's writings. They are complementary.

The outpouring of the Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost fulfils the promise of power for mission (Acts 1:8). This latter promise of power differs from the earlier promise (Luke 24:49) in that it is more specific. The power is not personal force but is, in fact, a manifestation of the Spirit.² This promise also reveals the purpose of the gift of the Spirit; it is for witness.

The Baptism of the Spirit

This is vital New Testament experience with God. The *KJV* speaks of being “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 1:5), With in this phrase comes from the Greek word *en*, which can also be rendered in, as both *TAB* and *NIV* note.³ The word *baptism* means plunging, dipping, or immersing. By using this terminology, the Bible depicts the experience as a complete immersion in the Spirit of God. At the same time, the Bible describes a person who receives this experience as been filled with the Spirit.

The book of Acts describes the baptism of the Spirit in many ways: “filled with the Holy Spirit (2:4); “ the promise of the Holy Spirit” (2:33); “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (2:38); “ the Holy Spirit came on all” (10:44); “pour out the gift of the Holy Spirit” (10:45); “received the Holy Spirit” (10:47); “the Holy Spirit came on them” (19:6). All these phrases simply identify the same New Testament experience in different ways. When empty human vessels are baptized in the Spirit, they are filled with the Spirit. When God pours out His

²Roger Stronstad. *The Charismatic Theology of St Luke*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 52.

³ The Baptism of the Holy Spirit, <http://ourworld.com/purse.com/homepage/pentecostal/New-Ch8.htm> (accessed 21 September 2007).

Spirit on people, the Spirit comes on them, they receive the Spirit and they are filled with the Spirit. When God gives the spirit, He fulfils His promise and men receive the Spirit. Jesus described the Spirit as living water that would quench spiritual thirst. However, the Holy Spirit is not actually a fluid is God Himself. The Bible also associates the Spirit with fire and wind but Spirit is not literally fire, wind, or water.

Is Baptism of the Holy Spirit Part of Salvation?

Most theologians recognize the essentiality of being filled with Holy Spirit, that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is part of the new birth. Bloesch said, we insist that baptism of the Spirit must not be distinguished from the new birth.⁴ Another non-Pentecostal theologian, Anthony Hoekema stated, if we have been born again, we have the Spirit, since the Spirit can regenerate us.⁵ He also wrote, Baptism in the Spirit is not an experience distinct from and usually subsequent to conversion... but is simultaneous with conversion and an integral aspect of conversion... All Christians have been Spirit-baptized. Spirit-baptism is... identical with regeneration.⁶

Others also say, the baptism of the Spirit is the means by which receive Christ into our lives. There is no separation between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). Christ dwells us by the indwelling of the Spirit (Ephesians 3:16-17). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is just the beginning of a continual life of being filled with Spirit. It is not an experience only for the select few, nor is it a post-conversional experience received only after long tarrying and agonizing. Rather, it is part of conversion and it comes with repentance and faith. A person who receives the Spirit has not reached a point of perfection, but has simply begun to live a Christian life. After being baptized in the Spirit,

⁴ Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 11,250, quoting Benjamin Warfield, "Justification by Faith – Out of Date?," *Present Truth*, vol 4 (August 1975), 9

⁵ Anthony Hoekema, *What About Tongues Speaking?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 114.

⁶ Anthony Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism* (Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 20-21.

he must seek to be renewed continually by submitting to the leading of the Spirit, letting Him have full control, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

Roman Catholic View of Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

According to the official teaching of the Catholic Church, when Catholics are confirmed they receive the out pouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, that is to say, the Holy Spirit is already given to the believer in baptism and confirmation. The Catholic Encyclopadia summarizes the importance of Cornelius' baptism as follow:

The baptism of Cornelius is an important event of the history of the early Church. The gate of the Church, within which thus far only those who were circumcised and observed the law of Moses had been admitted, were now thrown open to the uncircumcised Gentiles without the obligation of submitting to the Jewish ceremonial laws.⁷

Emphasis of the event is on the release of the existing spiritual gifts already given to the individual through baptism and Confirmation. However, a growing community of Charismatic Renewal Catholics believes that there is further experience of empowerment with the Holy Spirit. As stated by Rev. Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, "Baptism of the Spirit is not a sacrament, but it is related to a sacrament... to the sacraments of Christian initiation. The Baptism in the Spirit makes real and in a way renews Christian initiation."⁸

Reformed View

Reformed theology views the Baptism with the Holy Spirit as a "once-only" event that occurred at Pentecost. In contrast to the Pentecost/Charismatic view, Reformed Theology sees the baptism with the Holy Spirit not as an "empowerment" or "gifting" experience by

⁷ F. Bechtel. Catholic Encyclopedia. 1908.

⁸ *Baptism with the Holy Spirit*. http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_the_Holy_Spirit. (accessed on 10 September 2007).

individual believers, either at the time of salvation or subsequent to salvation, but rather as part of a “once-for-all”, completed accomplishment for the church as a whole. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is seen as a seal of the Spirit of Christ given to the church at one specific point in history. It is not an experience to be individually repeated among believers.⁹

An Experience Subsequent to Regeneration

The work of the Spirit, however, is not just an inner transformation of new birth and sanctification; it is also a work of empowering believers as witnesses for Christ, thus fulfilling the mission of the Church (Acts 1:8). Peter presented the initial descent of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as a mighty inauguration of the last days in which all of God’s people will be baptized, or filled, with the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18). The final words of his sermon are, “repent and baptized...And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39). Far from being a one-time event on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit is noted to have baptized or filled, believer after believer. The book of Acts shows repeated and continuing empowerment by the Holy Spirit and the impartation of powerful gifts for ministry (Acts 8: 17; 9:17; 10:44-46; 19:4-7).

The baptism in the Spirit is subsequent to and distinct from the new birth. Luke, the author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles, generally presents the baptism or infilling of the Spirit as something which occurs to disciples, or believers, his characteristic terms for those who have already been converted or saved. For Luke, baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience distinct from and logically subsequent to personal salvation. Moreover, Luke presents baptism in the Spirit and its accompanying power as the normal expectation of believers.

⁹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_the_Holy_Spirit. (accessed on 10 September 2007).

Subsequent usually means a time separation, but not always. The Gentiles who had gathered at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10) seemingly experienced both regeneration and baptism in the Holy Spirit at the same time. While a theological description of what happened would require regeneration as a prerequisite for baptism in the Spirit, everything happened so quickly that two separate works of God were experienced as one event. In this case, Spirit baptism was logically subsequent to regeneration, although it may not have been subsequent in time to any perceptible degree.

Every believer has the privilege of being baptized in the Spirit and should then expect to speak in tongues. The obvious starting point for such a declaration is the account of the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). On that day all believers were gathered together in one place (Acts 2:1); their number was apparently about 120 (Acts 1:15). For roughly ten days they had been waiting for the promise of the Father, as Jesus had charged them to do prior to His ascension (Acts 1:4). Then according to Acts 2:4, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. As Peter explained to the crowd witnessing the marvellous event, this outpouring of the Spirit fulfilled the ancient prophecy of Joel for the last days (cf. also Acts 2:39).

Tongues as Initial Physical Evidence

The Holy Spirit can inspire people to speak in languages which they have not learned, as was demonstrated conclusively on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when people from over the world heard Galileans speaking foreign languages which they could not have known. In the morning era similar episodes have occurred many times. The expression initial physical evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit refers to the first outward, observable sign that the Holy Spirit has come in filling power. The repeated testimony of Scripture is that this physical

sign occurred at the time the Spirit was poured out on individuals. When the 120 disciples were filled the Spirit, they spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4).

Samaria: Acts 8:4-17

The second recorded Spirit baptism – outpouring of the Spirit on people occurred for the first time in Samaria. Philip took the gospel to Samaria and the Samaritans listened to him, believed his message and were baptized in water in the name of Jesus. However, when the apostles heard what was happening they sent Peter and John. When Peter and John prayed for the Samaritans and laid hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17).

In the account of Peter and John’s ministry among the Samaritans, speaking in tongues is not specifically mentioned but it is strongly implied. After the apostles had laid hands on the Samaritans, some visible and extraordinary manifestation accompanied the reception of the Spirit. This is evidence for, after seeing something remarkable, the magician Simon wanted to buy the ability to confer the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:18 notes explicitly, “when Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money.” Based on the pattern found in Acts 2, 10, 19, it seems most likely that when Simon saw the Samaritan believers speaking in tongues. Had the experience been only by faith without any accompanying sign, Simon would not have known whether the Samaritan believers actually received the Holy Spirit.

Paul’s Conversion

God arrested Saul of Tarsus (Paul) by the light from heaven on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). He was knocked and was blinded by the light of Christ’s presence. After being led to Damascus, still without sight, Saul was visited by a believer named Ananias, who said to him, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here has

sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Ananias regarded Saul’s conversion as having already occurred, apparently at the time of his encounter with Christ. Nevertheless, Saul still needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and Ananias prayed for him to that end. Clearly Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. Though no details of this filling are given but we know from the 1 Corinthians 14:18 that he prayed in tongues regular and often.

The Gentiles in Caesarea (Act 10:44-48)

The next account of initial physical evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is centered on Cornelius, a Roman centurion who lived in the city of Caesarea. He was devout, feared God, and gave much alms, prayed to God often. Luke understands speaking in tongues to demonstrate the infilling presence of the Holy Spirit; this is clearly indicated by an examination of Act 10:44-48.

Cornelius was not a Jew but a Gentile. Upon God’s direct command, Peter went to Caesarea and preached the gospel message to Cornelius, his kinsmen and his friends. While Peter was preaching, his Gentile listeners all received the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues.

Later Peter discussed the Cornelius incident with the apostles and believers in Jerusalem. He referred to the phenomenon he witnessed: “so if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?” (Acts 11:17). The next verse confirms the apostle and believers accepted tongues as convincing evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit: “when they said this, they had no further objections and praised God.” (11:18).

The Gentiles did not have to ask if they had really received this mighty outpouring. They knew Peter and the six witnesses did not say “I think” or I suppose or even “I trust” or “I believe” these Gentiles were baptized in the Spirit. They knew, surely, in the midst of all

the questioning and discussion about the Holy Spirit today, we need the same convincing evidence. We too can know that we have received the identical experienced described in acts 2:4.¹⁰

The Disciples of John at Ephesus

Years latter Paul came to the great city of Ephesus on his third missionary journey. According to Acts 19:7, Paul met twelve disciples and had a dialogue with them. He asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, No we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the person to believe in the one coming after him that is in Jesus” (Act 19:2-4).

Horton says, “Having believed” *pisteusantes*, is a Greek aorist (past) participle meaning that the action precedes the action of the main verb. That is why the King James translators, as good Greek scholars, translated the participle “since ye believed.” They wanted to bring out that the believing must take place before the receiving. This also bring out the fact that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a distinct experience following conversion¹¹

Luke recorded when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:6). This incident is extremely important to us today because it provides strong evidence that baptism of the Spirit with tongues was norm for the entire New Testament church. Not only is this evidence from Paul’s two questions for believers, but it is also apparent from the fact that God chose to record this incident.¹²

Bruce said the reception of the Spirit took place in four different ways in Acts:

¹⁰Stanley M. Horton. *The Book of Acts, The wind of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1996), 139.

¹¹ Ibid, 221.

¹² I. Howard Marshall and others. *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, IL/Leicester, England: Inter Varsity, 1996), 1128.

1. immediately after the exercise of faith in Christ and submission to baptism in His name
2. with the imposition of hands, a considerable time after the exercise of faith and submission to baptism
3. while hearers listened in faith to the preaching of the gospel, before baptism and (apparently) without the imposition of hands, or
4. after baptism in the name of Jesus and the imposition of apostolic hand in a certain measure become disciple of Jesus already.

Conclusion

Biblical scholars note the close association of biblical references to “baptism in the Holy Spirit” with descriptions of speaking in tongues. In the Acts of the Apostles, there are three specific references to individuals’ speaking in tongues: Acts 2:4; Acts 10:46 and Acts 19:6. Each of these instances of tongues-speaking is immediately subsequent to or contemporary with an experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The experience in Acts 2:1-4, that included tongues-speaking may be connected with the prediction by Jesus in Acts 1:5 that the disciples would be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. This experience was referred to later in retrospect by Peter as well, as being baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:6).

The description of Cornelius’ household receiving the gospel from Peter and his companions in experience of the disciples, relating that Cornelius and his friends and family were baptized with the Holy Spirit as the disciples had been at Pentecost (Acts 11:6). Acts 19:6, which includes reference to individual in Ephesus speaking in tongues although not specifically using the term “baptized with the Holy Spirit”, states that the Holy Spirit came upon them when Paul laid his hands on upon them.

We these references I point to these passages to affirm what they believe to be adequate Scriptural basis for their view that speaking in tongues is an initial evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.