

Baptism With the Holy Ghost

Part of the restoration process is unity in these last days. If we as Christians cannot speak as one, the world will not believe our report. Jesus will not come until we come together and that is soon to happen. The concept of the Baptism with the Holy Ghost is another one of those mysteries that has been used to divide the church. Many believe that they are spiritually superior than other Christians, a kind of super-saint. So before I relate my study of the issue I would like to share with you my personal experiences with prophecy, glossolalia, and the baptism with the Holy Ghost in order to give you a clear understanding of my apostolic calling and how I arrive at my conclusions.

My prophetic abilities came in the late sixties through the reading of the scriptures and the Baptism with the Holy Ghost. It wasn't through intercession (although my Mother prayed) or tarrying or laying on of hands, even though they can be valid as well. Although a nominal Christian and thought I loved the Lord, signs and wonders were not experienced within me until I found by the reading of the Word that my life was sinful. I simply and sincerely reached my hand up and said I'm sorry. God suddenly and profoundly engulfed me with a touch of the spirit that I had not known existed. My whole being was effected, looking back it seems like every molecule and nerve ending in my body was suddenly aglow to this new experiential truth. It was a total surprise; I hadn't worked myself into anything at all. In a split second I felt that I had just been given the keys to the greatest answers in history and knew everything I ever needed to know about the meaning of life and the secrets of the ages. I also received a glimpse of the future and have since believed that I would be part of end time events. And I praised the Lord.

No power in earth, heaven or hell could ever dissuade me from the fact that this was an authentic spiritual glory in my life, it was too real, too profound. This goes for others as well, same God, similiar experiences. I only found out what spiritual baptism was later through study, I believe that it was providential that I did not receive the Baptism of the Holy Ghost through another person. I do not teach that the Baptism with the Holy Ghost is necessary for justification or that the Holy Ghost Baptism needs to be the intense feeling that I experienced. I do not teach that Christians have to be baptized in the Holy Ghost in the process of sanctification but it helps; sanctification comes through faith, love and holiness. I do not teach that the Baptism with the Holy Ghost proves itself by any one particular gift, be it tongues or prophecy, that is a schismatic lie spread by satan to divide the Church, God is calling me to unite. For others to teach against this baptism process just because they have never experienced a move of God of this magnitude or in the same way is foolishness.

My experience with prophecy came also by the reading of the word. Through my first time reading of the Bible I knew nothing of charisms, much less prophetic utterances, but I respected the Bible as something that had already dramatically changed my life. I had read Paul's words in I Corinthians: "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy. For he that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man understands him, however in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he that prophesies speaks unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." I vividly remember the day. After reading those verses I admitted to God my ignorance in even knowing what Paul meant but that if I should especially desire prophecy please give it to me. Not knowing what to expect, I believed. Not soon after this, I was speaking to a brother outside my home. As I spoke, the Holy Ghost came and touched my lips and started to make them move in a way that I had no control. My body was elated as though I was floating. I started giving this man an ecstatic gospel message from God that he needed to hear and with an authority and wisdom of which I had no prior knowledge. At that moment, the darkness of the autumn evening, the leaves sounding through the trees and all nature seemed attuned to what I was saying. What God had done that night is to confirm His word in me by that sign. Only then did I know what prophecy really meant. I know that God's true prophets will agree. Of those who disagree, I know that I can challenge any number of would-be prophets, if need be I could take them behind the woodshed of the Holy Ghost and thrash each of them with spiritual power, putting them all to shame. Not only myself but also any true prophet of God in these last days should have that confidence and power.

Baptism is an action that suggests a total immersion. John's water baptism was for repentance and a preparation for the spiritual baptism, the promised Baptism with the Holy Ghost comes from the Father and in it we receive power.

The Baptism with the Holy Ghost first occurred on the day of Pentecost following the ascension. This is a New Testament phenomenon, there are instances of those in the Old Testament that were filled with the Holy Ghost, but never a total baptism. After the resurrection, Jesus had appeared to the disciples, breathed on them and said "receive the Holy Ghost; whoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoever sins you retain, they are retained." This breathing on the disciples was the Holy Ghost but was still not the Baptism with the Holy Ghost because Jesus told them later when it would be. Just before Jesus had ascended into Heaven He

"commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which said He, you have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." you shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Jesus was taken unto heaven, "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."

The Baptism with the Holy Ghost is often confused with water baptism and initial conversion. Traditional Roman Catholic teaching combines the two in being born again. Many Roman and Anglican Catholics are now being baptized with the Holy Ghost despite tradition. Many churches confuse the Baptism with the Holy Ghost with the indwelling of the Spirit; puritan Calvinists especially are guilty of this error. Wesley and Whitefield ignited the Great Awakening with the great truth that justification and sanctification were separate processes. The right-wing puritan preachers of today however, teach the error that all Christians are saints in the broadest sense of the term, these extreme fundamentalists are leading their conservative congregations in thinking that they have already been baptized with the Holy Ghost. When Paul was in Ephesus finding certain disciples, did he ask them if they received the Holy Ghost when they believed? No, Paul asked them "Have you received the Holy Ghost *since* you believed?" If you deny the difference, you are among the five foolish virgins that have yet to trim their lamps with the oil of the Holy Ghost.

Don't get me wrong, the five-fold ministry is as much Pentecostal as it is Apostolic and that includes speaking in tongues. But the schismatics teach that speaking in tongues is necessary or you haven't been baptized with the Holy Ghost. They don't just say that speaking in tongues is a sign of the Holy Ghost like other spiritual gifts, including love. They think that speaking in tongues is the **ONLY** proof and this where Satan gets the advantage to use this error to cause division, corruption and a congregation that is out of order. The worst of them then start to think that speaking in tongues is a badge of honor. It is no longer one or two and with an interpretation, it is whole congregations speaking at once in confusion. Some forget the teachings of Jesus and only worship Paul and the Holy Ghost; conversely, they conform to the letter of the law instead of living in the spirit. They would be better off stressing a higher gift like discernment or faith rather than tongues; condemnation is the norm and love and unity for outsiders is really far from them. Unfortunately, this has led to gross legalism and a babel of confusion and numbers them with the transgressors. Over time, more and more of these churches will be exposed as cults.

Fortunately the gift of tongues is still being used mightily to confirm His Spirit and rhema word in the congregations and there has been much interpretation. Symeon called the baptism "the pledge of the Spirit", and each should make an effort to receive. Finney received a "mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost." It is for each and every Christian believer to enter into, but it has never been a requirement for salvation or sanctification. And the Baptism in the Spirit isn't always enough, we still need to grow with spirit anointed teaching or we could revert to old habits after the glow wears off. Watchman Nee writes: " Because the Lord Jesus died on the cross, I have received forgiveness of sins; because the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, I have received new life; because the Lord Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father, I have received the outpoured Spirit.

There are plenty of Christian teachers who teach the Baptism with the Holy Ghost differently than I have been describing. Do not totally reject them. We have not yet come into the unity of the faith that Paul has described for the five-fold ministers; we have not yet come into the stature of the fulness of Christ. But we are not to be children, carried about with every wind of doctrine, we are to speak the truth in love and be renewed in the spirit. If you lack the wisdom to understand these mysteries, you only need to ask of God in faith.

We will have to endure many trials and tribulations in order to enter the Kingdom. The main purpose of the Baptism With the Holy Ghost is to lead us into all truth and give us the spiritual power to enter the Kingdom in holiness. He has promised to not refuse gifts to those who ask of Him and it is the Holy Ghost who will teach you, whether you have been immersed in the Holy Ghost and received the power or not. Asking is not enough, you must humble yourself and get rid of your spiritual pride to accept it. The Holy Ghost is the promised gift for the Church from the resurrected Christ and along with this immersion we receive power. Avoid conservative ministers who deny the power or try to quench the spirit or confuse the issue. Correct them if you must, but it may be better just to ignore them, accept the truth for yourself and be led to a spirit filled congregation. Jesus is coming soon and the Manifest Sons of God are about to be revealed. The unity that Jesus prayed for needs to be extended now over the entire earth. That unity starts within each one of us who are joined together of the same mind and the same spirit. Jesus is calling His church to order.

Contributed by Betty Hightower