

The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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Holy Spirit Baptism #2

In our first installment of this three part article on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we saw that Charismatics believe that Holy Spirit baptism is something that should be experienced by all who claim to be Christians. They further suggest that one cannot be what God wants him or her to be without receiving the baptism of the Spirit because Holy Spirit baptism helps one to live a sanctified life. That view, however, contradicts the Bible. The teaching of the New Testament is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised only to the apostles (Acts 1:1-8), and that they were the ones who received the fulfillment of the promise (Acts 2:1-16).

The Pentecostal conclusion that Holy Spirit baptism helped early Christians live a better life for Christ also misses the mark of what the Bible teaches. The purpose for Holy Spirit baptism was not for sanctification. What, then, was the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism? Let's see what the Bible says for it does indeed reveal to us the specific purpose.

The purpose of Holy Spirit Baptism

Again, Pentecostals believe that Holy Spirit baptism gives us power to live and serve God and to perform miracles, but where is the scripture for that conclusion? Is that what Jesus said the Comforter would do for the apostles? No! The apostles could perform miracles before they were baptized with the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:1-9, 17-19). Furthermore, Holy Spirit baptism is not the source of power for faithful living and service. Old Testament saints were not baptized with the Holy Spirit, yet many of them served God admirably and lived blamelessly (Job 1:1; Genesis 17:1; Exodus 19:1-8). Where is the Bible example of God ever changing a man morally by the direct or miraculous influence of the Holy Spirit? There is no passage in the Old or New Testament. God has always changed man morally through teaching. In the days of Noah when the world was full of ungodliness, God tried to change man through teaching (1 Peter 3:18-20; 2 Peter 2:5; Genesis 6:3). God tried to change the Israelites through teaching (Nehemiah 9:13-30). After the cross this method of God's did not change. After Christ died and rose from the dead, God still tried to change the world morally through teaching (Act 2:36-47; Ephesians 3:1-5). If God worked any other way to influence man morally, i.e., through miraculous means of the Spirit, it would violate the free will of

man. So, the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism was not to empower men to live right and serve God. In fact, those who were baptized with the Holy Spirit could still make mistakes and sin against God (Galatians 2:11-17).

What, then, was the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism? It was for the purpose of *inspiration* and *confirmation*. We have already seen that only the apostles were promised to be baptized with the Spirit. They were the ones who received it. What did it give them the power to do? It gave them the power to preach (Acts 1:8). The Spirit inspired the apostles, guiding them into all truth (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13; Ephesians 3:1-5).

Next, the Spirit gave the apostles the ability to perform miracles in order to *confirm* the word (Mark 16:19, 20; Hebrew 2:4). Now, as we stated earlier, the apostles performed miracles before they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, but now they could do more...they could lay hands on others and give them the ability to perform miracles as well. In a time when the written word was not complete, this was an essential part of the apostle's work, and it was a sign of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Corinthians 9:1). All that the Spirit did miraculously fell into the categories of inspiration or confirmation. The rest of the Spirit's work was and is accomplished through the medium of the Word. The Spirit's work in conversion and sanctification is accomplished by and attributed to the Word. The Spirit converts (John 3:3-5), but He does so through the Word (Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 1:23). The Spirit sanctifies (1 Peter 1:2), but He accomplishes it through the Word (John 17:17). So, when we think of the miraculous work of the Spirit, including the effects or results of one being baptized with the Holy Spirit, that work is always associated with inspiration or confirmation.

The question that needs to be asked now is, "Is there still a purpose for Holy Spirit baptism?" The answer is no. Do we need the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel? No, we have the gospel in written form. Remember, the apostles were guided in all truth, and we have that truth today. Latter day revelation or inspiration is not necessary, and if we had inspiration, then the written Word would not be necessary. Do we need miraculous deeds to confirm the Word? No, because again we have the written Word, including the miraculous works of the Spirit recorded to produce faith (John 20:30, 31). The Word confirms itself. So then, if we can see that there is no longer a purpose for Holy Spirit baptism, we should see that the baptism no longer exist. Hence, Paul could say that there is one baptism (Ephesians 4:4). We know that water baptism is still valid and even commanded today. That baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and puts us into Christ (Galatians 3:27). If Holy Spirit baptism is still around, then we have two baptisms and that contradicts Paul's words in the Ephesians passage. The truth is that baptism of the Holy Spirit ceased a long time ago and is no longer necessary. In the next article we will look at what happened to Cornelius in Acts 10.

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