

Major Bible Themes

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CHAPTER XVII

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT: HIS BAPTISM

Since all the positions and possessions of the believer are his on the sole ground of his place in Christ through the baptism with the Spirit, misunderstanding of this doctrine is fraught with serious results. The safeguard here, as always, is in adhering strictly to the Word of God. In all the Scriptures, there are not more than eleven direct references to the baptism with the Spirit. In taking them up in order we discover:

1. A plain prediction by John the Baptist, mentioned once in each of the four Gospels, that there would be a baptism with the Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). This four-fold prediction is important; but there is no light from these Scriptures as to what constitutes that baptism with the Spirit.
2. In Acts 1:4-5 we read: "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Revelation here advances only to the point of assurance that this ministry of

the Spirit would be "not many days hence." This we believe anticipates the Day of Pentecost; but no light is yet shed on the exact meaning of this work of the Spirit.

3. In Acts 11:15-18, we have Peter's defense concerning his unjewish action in going to the house of Cornelius the Gentile. Peter states: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" Particular attention should be given to this passage, for here, more than anywhere else in the Scriptures, false interpretations as to the meaning of the baptism with the Spirit are founded.

It should be noted that in this passage Peter makes three references to the Spirit: He states that (1) the Spirit fell on them; (2) Peter was reminded of the promise of the baptism with the Spirit (Acts 1:4, 5.); And (3) the Spirit was given to the Gentiles as He had been given at Pentecost to the Jews. The error concerning this passage arises from supposing that the Spirit "falling on them" is identical with the baptism with the Spirit.

Turning back to Acts 10:44-48, where the first account is given of Peter's experience in Cornelius' house, we find that no reference is made to the baptism with the Spirit; but the Spirit, it is written, "fell on them," and as a direct result they "spake with tongues." "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God."

It is equally important to read the account of the advent of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as stated in Acts 2:1-4. "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." It should be observed that they spake with tongues on the Day of Pentecost as a direct result of the Spirit's filling, and that, according to Acts 10:44-48, they spake with tongues as a direct result of the Spirit falling on them. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the Spirit falling upon them and the Spirit filling them are one and the same thing. In each case the result was identical; but if this be true, it is evidently unscriptural to relate any outward manifestations of the Spirit, such as speaking with tongues, to the baptism with the Spirit. Not discerning this error, multitudes today are "seeking the baptism of the Spirit," and are assured that if "it" can be gained, they, too, will speak with tongues.

4. Of five remaining passages which by any interpretation give direct teaching concerning the baptism with the Spirit (Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12; 1 Cor. 12:13), 1 Corinthians 12:13 alone gives any revelation as to the meaning and purpose of this ministry. The passage is as follows: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Every great theme of Scripture will be found to be taken up exhaustively in one central passage, and 1 Corinthians 12:13 is evidently the one clear revelation as to the meaning of the phrase, "the baptism with the Spirit." This passage clearly indicates that the baptism with the Spirit is the divine operation by which believers are made members in the Body of Christ, and are vitally united to Christ by partaking of one Spirit.

The unsaved sustain no living relation to Christ; but the saved are all said to be "in Christ." There was a time when they were not in Christ, but now they are "in Him." If we inquire as to how and when they became thus related to Christ, the answer from God's Word would be that they were placed "in Christ" by the baptism with the Spirit, and that it occurred at the moment they believed and were saved. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into the Spirit."

In considering this great passage, certain crucial revelations which are contained in it should be noted in particular:

1. The pronoun "we," as used here, and throughout the Epistles, is an accurate classification of all saved people, in contrast with the unsaved. The word "we" excludes every unregenerate person and, as certainly, includes every regenerate person. No greater violence could be done to this Scripture than to interpret this word "we" as though it represented some inner group or favored class of Christians. And to give the strongest possible emphasis to the fact that every saved person is included, the word "all" is also employed.

2. When members are added to the body of Christ it is accomplished by the ministry of the Spirit, and this ministry is none other than the baptism with the Spirit. By that operation those who believe on Christ are vitally placed "in Him." As a living union is formed by the process of grafting, and the branch thus united is organically in the vine, and the vine by all its vitality and life is in the branch, so the believer thus united to Christ by the baptism with the Spirit is "in Christ" and Christ is "in him." Again, as a member might be vitally joined to a human body and thus be in that body as to position and relationship, and the life of the head flowing into that new member be imparting its life-giving energy and vital force, so, we being "in Christ," by the baptism with the Spirit, are vitally joined to Christ, and are in Christ as to position and relationship, and He is in us as the supply of our eternal life and every vital force.

Whatever the former position or relationship was of either the branch before it was grafted in, or the human member before it was newly joined to the human body, such relationship forever

ceases, and the branch when grafted in, becomes a living part of the vine, and the member if joined to the human body, becomes a vital part of the very personality of the one to whom it might be joined.

It is important to note the unvarying fact that all that the believer is and all that he has depends on his place "in Christ" through the baptism with the Spirit (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:6; 2:18).

Thus we may conclude that the baptism with the Spirit is in no way related to the outward manifestations of power in the life of the believer, which manifestations follow the Spirit's filling; it is rather the placing of the believer in that vital union with Christ wherein it may be said of him that he is "in Christ" and Christ is "in him" (John 14:20).

There are upwards of one hundred passages which emphasize the fact that the believer is "in Christ." Being in Christ is the essential fact of the believer's position in the New Creation. Therefore, the baptism with the Spirit is the divinely ordained method whereby he enters that marvelous sphere of relationship wherein Christ is the new Federal Head -- the Last Adam.

QUESTIONS

1. How many direct references to the Baptism with the Spirit are found in the Scriptures?
2. State the information on this theme presented in the four Gospels and Acts 1:4, 5.
3. State the information on this theme and use of terms in Acts 11:15-18; 10:44-48; and Acts 2:1-4.
4. Do any of these passages define the thing accomplished by the Spirit's baptism?
5. Name the remaining passages bearing on this theme and indicate the one which presents a definition.
6. What is accomplished by the baptism with the Spirit?
7. What class is included in this baptism?
8. When is this ministry undertaken by the Spirit?
9. What relation do the unsaved sustain to it?
10. State why you believe this ministry is not limited to some, or a portion of the believers.
11. What two illustrations are employed in the Scriptures in setting forth the joining of the believer to Christ?

12. Do all former relationships cease when one is baptized into Christ's body?

13. Are those thus placed in Christ ever taken out?

14. a. How is the New Creation formed?

b. Who is its Federal Head?

c. Will the Head of the New Creation ever fall?