

The Baptism In The Holy Spirit

By The Most Reverend Philip Edward Phlegar Weeks

© by Barnabas Ministries, Inc. 2010

A number of articles I have written regarding Gifts or Manifestations given by the Holy Spirit to the Church and the People of God. Reference has been made in several articles to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, but I have said nothing about the Scriptural support of this opportunity, nor how one goes about receiving it. A friend, who is a retired Episcopal priest, brought this to my attention. I will attempt to rectify this omission.

In preparing to write this article I took a look at the books on my library shelf. I found a 56 pages report on "*The Work Of The Holy Spirit*" by the United Presbyterian Church. A wonderful little message entitled "*The Baptism of The Holy Spirit, and Renewal of The Church*" by Andrew A. Jumper, another Presbyterian cleric. A booklet entitled "*A Scriptural Outline Of The Baptism In The Holy Spirit*" by George and Harriet Gillies. A 71 pages treatise entitled "*Theological and Pastoral Orientations On The Catholic Charismatic Renewal*" which was given to me when I visited Joseph Cardinal Suenens in Malines, Belgium. These were a few of my collection, all of which were written between 1967 and 1974. There has been a scarcity of writings on the subject in recent decades due to token acceptance of the charismatic dimension that has led to complacency. Perhaps the time has come for us to be reminded of the words of Irenaeus: "Where the Church is, there is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church". The ideal is for the whole church to be renewed charismatically so there be no need for movements. Without the Spirit there is no Body of Christ, but with the Spirit there is the People of God with a mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is more than a few times in which the individual encounters the Holy Spirit. He is at work in His convicting ministry to bring the soul to a realization of the need of a Savior, and Jesus Christ is God's remedy for original sin. When one is baptized as an infant in water the person receives the Holy Spirit for regeneration. Apart from baptism if a person believes and accepts Jesus the Spirit comes with His infilling. So many ways the Holy Spirit is at work in a person's life and the life of the Church. We are reminded of that each time the Priest holds his hands over the elements of bread and wine and asks the Spirit for the *charisma* (gift) of these elements becoming the Body and Blood of our Risen Lord. Without the Holy Spirit we are lifeless, whether a collection of people called The Church, or an individual seeking a relationship with God.

We encounter the Holy Spirit first in Scripture at the creation (Genesis 1:2) when God spoke the Word and the world was formed, but lifeless. No wind. No singing birds. No flowing streams. The Spirit of God hovered over the creation and brought it to life. As breath is taken by a new born child giving it life, so the Spirit of God breathed upon His creation brings it to life, and the Spirit in His unique fashion working in the individual brings forth vibrant and eternal life.

In the Gospels we encounter a man named John the Baptizer. People expected a Messiah and because of the unusual ministry of John, they wanted to know if he were the expected

One. He assured them he was not, but sent to prepare and announce the coming of one who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29) and impart the Holy Spirit in the form of a different kind of baptism (John 1: 33). In answer to the people John explains that as he baptized with water the anointed One would baptize with the Spirit (Matthew 3:11). In the Gospel of John Jesus spends considerable time teaching about the Holy Spirit in chapters 14, 15, and 16. Jesus promises to send the One He calls “The Helper”. J.B. Phillips in his post World War II translation of the New Testament calls the Spirit “One upon whom you can lean”. In simplified terms you might consider Him a CRUTCH. As a crutch helps a lame person walk, so the Holy Spirit enables the believer to live out the life into which God has called us. In these chapters Jesus assures the believer of the power to do the things He did and even greater things through the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

On the first Sunday night of the Resurrection, Jesus appears in The Upper Room and breathes on the Apostles saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20: 22). But He also promises them a different measure of the Spirit than that given in regeneration or new birth (born again). At His Ascension He tells them they will be “baptized” in the Holy Spirit and receive power enabling them to witness (testify to others) all they have seen and heard (Acts 1: 5, 8). This “baptism” or “empowerment” occurred on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) accompanied by anointing fire, praise in languages not normally spoken by those being empowered, and boldness. Throughout the book of the Acts there are other references to this Baptism and accompanying signs as evidence that something happened when the Holy Spirit came upon a person (Acts 8: 14-17; Acts 10: 44-46; Acts 11:15-17; Acts 13:52; Acts 19:6). These references would imply that the early Apostles believed it essential to the Christian’s life that he receive this empowerment of the Spirit. In the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopal and Charismatic Episcopal Church (in other words, churches embracing the Apostolic Succession) liturgy refers to Act 8:14-17 in the Sacrament of Confirmation which is the sacramental means by which this empowerment or baptism is to occur. The fact that many who are confirmed fail to experience any change in their lives is usually due to improper preparation.

Let me inject a personal experience. When I received the baptism in the Spirit on April 25, 1969 I did not have the manifestation of tongues. In fact, I was unaware what I was receiving because all I was seeking was the ability to carry out a ministry I had never before performed – an exorcism! But God in His divine wisdom knew what I needed and it was a Power beyond myself, and that was exactly what I received. It was not until the following June 19 that I prayed in a language I had never before spoken. For me that was a miracle because I have extreme difficulty with learning languages different from my natural vocabulary. I might add the ability to “pray in the Spirit” (tongues) enriched the entire experience and emboldened me in a way unlike before. But in the intervening days between April 25 and June 19 what was evident in my life and ministry was what I have also found in reading the Acts of the Apostles. JESUS became real. JESUS became the central focus. In other words, God took on a first name, and it was JESUS. That was all that mattered.

My preaching took on a different note because all I wanted to talk about was JESUS. He became the answer, not a “pat” answer to everything, but a reality that allowing JESUS to be in charge made a difference in how things got done, both in my life and in the life of the Church I served. When people came to me with problems I would tell them about this Power Jesus has to give and pray with them to receive the baptism in the Spirit. On some occasions they immediately spoke in “tongues”. The morning June, my wife, received the Baptism she was kneeling at the altar along with eighteen other women praying for various things. In June’s case she was praying on behalf of a sister-in-law but after praying with her request I could not get my hands off her head. They were heavy as a rock, and I knew June’s heart and desire and I said, “Come on Holy Spirit” and she burst into tongues. People on either side of her received their portion of the Holy Spirit. What a morning! And there were some who did not speak in tongues until later as was the case of one of our traditional church members who started her night time prayer kneeling beside her bed only to realize the alarm was going off and morning had come with her spending time all night in prayer. She came to church that morning; we had a teaching mission going on, and gave a word of knowledge to the teacher. The following Monday night at the Rectory we were praying for a man whom she did not know, and she prophesied over him identifying things in his life unknown to her. At a subsequent Monday night I was sitting beside her during prayer time and heard her praying in tongues. Later I asked when that happened to which she said, “well, the Spirit had given me other gifts, I thought I may as well accept this one too.” And there were some who needed a slight amount of encouragement to release the gift of tongues.

The early Pentecostals believed tongues were the evidence of the Baptism in the Spirit. As I have said, and from experience, my praying in a language not learned by me brought about a tremendous release. It was surrender to the improbable and impossible. It was giving up control over my mind, and permitting the Spirit to intervene as He knew best, but it was not an evidence of the baptism. The awareness of a supernatural Power and the centrality of Jesus superseded the manifestation of tongues.

How do you receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit? You ask Jesus for it! Jesus is the baptizer; the one who gives the Spirit from the Father. I will suggest a pattern but keep in mind that God is larger than any formula man may provide and He may have His own procedure in fulfilling His promise. At his Pentecost day sermon Peter gave a simple one, two, three formula: (1) repent; (2) be baptized; (3) receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) but God blew up Peter’s formula with Cornelius’ household who received the baptism in the Spirit with prophecy and speaking in tongues before water baptism (Act 10: 44-46).

- 1 - Re-dedicate your acceptance and belief in Jesus as Savior.
- 2 - Ask forgiveness especially for any dabbling that you might have done in the occult, recognizing that the unholy spirit will be very uncomfortable with the Holy Spirit. The two cannot dwell together.
- 3 - Ask Jesus to baptize you and open your mind and heart to receive whatever He has to impart. Be specific because Jesus is the baptizer (Luke 3:16; John 1:33).

You may feel yourself engulfed in the awareness of love and unconditional acceptance. You may weep. You may feel plugged into a source of Power not felt before. You may find a hunger to read the Scriptures. You may want to express your love in praise to Jesus and find yourself doing so in words you had not learned. In Acts 2: 4 those first Pentecostals spoke words and the Spirit gave them utterance. It is unusual that the Holy Spirit will make you say or do something you are not inclined to say or do, so you may begin with sounds and the Spirit will give you syllables that to you may make no sense but to God they are precious words (Romans 8: 26). In my personal experience it was as if I “saw” words in my mind, spoke them and like a repeater rifle firing, a new word followed the one spoken.

Following a Thursday morning Bible study and Eucharist, one of our parishioners left Church of the Good Shepherd (Charleston, WV) and went home. She had heard the testimony of others who had received the Baptism in the Spirit. Upon arriving home she lay on her living room floor and began asking Jesus to baptize her. She felt that overwhelming love and began to pray in an unlearned language. Later in the day she phoned to tell me what happened and ask for assurance that it was real. One of the first things after receiving the gift of the Spirit is Satan will try to rob you by telling you it was a delusion, not real, imagination, and if you spoke unlearned words it was gibberish. Don't forget God is the author of all languages and He understands gibberish also.

It was real! While some may need another to pray with them in order to receive, she did not. She asked believing the promise of Jesus in Luke 11: 13. She asked; the Father gave.