

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Part 1)

When Jesus was on the earth, He obviously could not be physically present with His disciples at all times. He told them that after He had gone back to Heaven, God the Father would send the Holy Spirit, the Counsellor, to be with them continually. Just before His Ascension Jesus again spoke about the coming of the Holy Spirit. **(Acts 1: 4-5) 'Jesus told them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait there. He said, "John baptized with water but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."' ' He then added, ' "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." ' (v.8)**

The word 'power' in the Greek means 'explosive power'. It certainly is explosive!

It was ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, that this very unusual happening occurred. Jesus had not previously given a description as to exactly how this was to happen so it would have been interesting to know their thoughts during those ten days! About 120 men and women were waiting in an upper room. Notice that they were together, not only to wait, but specifically to pray. How about that - a ten day Prayer Meeting. Is it any wonder that God responded in such an astounding way!

This is how the event is described in **Acts 2: 2-4. 'Suddenly a sound came from Heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and filled all the house where they were sitting. There appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.'** It is not recorded anywhere else in the Bible that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit took place in the same startling manner as this, with regard to the wind and the fire.

Note that **every** person present was enabled to speak in a language other than their own native tongue. Having spent hours learning French vocab. at school, receiving another language instantly like this is absolutely amazing. Even more wonderful about this occurrence is that this Baptism of the Holy Spirit was not just a one-off but ever since has been and is still available to every person who has given their life to Jesus Christ. When we become a Christian, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is an essential 'must have' in order to empower us to speak of Jesus much more boldly and also equips us to use the gifts of the Spirit for the benefit of others.

How does this phenomenon work?

When a person receives the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, it is often referred to as being able to 'speak in tongues' or 'Heavenly language' or 'Prayer language'. We have complete control as in normal speech and we are able to start, stop, talk, whisper, think in our heads and sing in tongues in exactly the same way as we do with our usual language. The words spoken cannot be understood naturally by our own minds because they come from the Holy Spirit. It is very rarely that folk know what language it is that they are speaking.

What use is it if we do not know what we are saying?

When we are talking in tongues it is always we who are talking to God; it is our side of the conversation. It is praising God or thanking God or blessing God or praying to God. The Holy Spirit is using the physical tongue in our own mouths to praise and intercede to God the Father on our behalf. When we do not know how to pray in a particular situation, then the Holy Spirit is praying for us

because He knows the innermost thoughts of our hearts. The Holy Spirit also prays in accordance with the will of God so the prayers are always exactly in line with the will of God. **(Romans 8: 26 – 27) ‘The Spirit helps us in our weaknesses for we do not know how to pray as we ought. The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. He who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.’**

Receiving

People today often receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit when another spirit-filled believer lays hands on them and prays for them. This is part of the empowering that they themselves have received enabling them to do this. The person praying does not have to be a Minister or Leader in the church; it is the way in which God can use any of us for the benefit of fellow Christians. Many Christians receive during their private prayer times.

A few words

Not everyone receives such a tremendous initial in-filling such as did those in the upper room at Pentecost. Sometimes a person may receive just a few words in an unknown language. If those words are constantly used in that person’s prayer-time, then the amount of language given will gradually increase. The words do not have to be learnt off by heart, they only need to be spoken out naturally and freely for the Holy Spirit to respond.

Empowering

One major result of receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is that it gives us much more confidence and a boldness to tell others of Jesus. This is known as ‘empowering’. When Jesus spoke to His disciples before His Ascension, He told them that this empowering would enable them to be witnesses (=speak about Jesus) everywhere.

There is also something more that is rather difficult to put into words. When people have received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and are speaking about Jesus, non-believers recognize that there is something different about those people. It can be seen on their faces and can be felt and sensed as they speak. It is of course, the way in which the Holy Spirit works in order to convict non-believers that they need Jesus as their Saviour, even though at that point, they may not understand what is happening to them.

The Day of Pentecost

Following their experience in the upper room, the people did not remain in the upper room, they went out into the street. They were still so overwhelmed by what had happened to them and were really bold, using the gifts of tongues that they had received, aloud and in public! There must have been very large crowds around at that time as there were folk from a number of other countries, who all understood in their own individual languages, what was being said. It was not jabbery nonsense that they were hearing; they were hearing what was being said in proper languages. Peter followed this by speaking about Jesus. The combination of the gifts of tongues and Peter’s preaching caused about 3,000 people to become Christians. What a day that must have been! No wonder Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem as He would have known just what was going to take place.