

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Part 2)

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues is often associated mainly with Pentecostal churches. I want to emphasize that it has nothing at all to do with any one denomination; it is something that is available for **ALL** Christians, regardless of their style of worship or denominational connection. The extraordinary ability to speak in an unknown language in this way often causes people to be very dubious about its authenticity. Even some Christian denominations teach that it is something that is not of God and therefore needs to be avoided. Over 800 years previously the prophet Joel, **(Joel 2: 28 – 29)** foretold that God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh and a whole range of folk are included. It is really strange that sometimes we can be Christians for years and read passages from the Bible over and over again and not connect with the truth that is being shown to us.

From natural to supernatural

When we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit we are stepping out from the natural into the supernatural. God not only gives us one unknown language but often a number of unknown languages. Why does He do this? I have noticed that the language changes according to the types of prayer that we are making. For example, if we are praising God then we will most likely use one particular language. If we are making a serious commitment or dedication of our lives to Him, then we may automatically change to another language. Interceding for others can bring yet another change. I have found that sometimes God adds another language for no apparent reason and I have come to the conclusion that it is just because God wishes to bless us. How good is that! The more open to God we are, the more He can work supernaturally in our lives. He can give us as many languages as He wishes if we leave the lid off the box and allow God to bless us over and over again in whatever way He chooses.

Why do some not receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

We choose if we wish to become Christians or not and are in control of that choice. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is given in His way and in His time; it is not something that we are able to make happen by our own thoughts or efforts.

There are obviously a number of reasons why a person does not receive. Here are a few thoughts that some may find helpful.

- Some say that it is something that they do not want.
- A fear of the unknown aspect of this.
- Some are very set in the traditions of their denomination and find it difficult to be open to things of the Spirit.
- A feeling that they are a bad person so are not good enough.
- Not persistent enough.
- Pride – Living a Christian life but relying on self for decision making etc. instead of relying on God. It is more of an unawareness of what God can do rather than a deliberate 'no-no'.
- Lack of teaching. Think that this is something limited to Bible times and does not apply today or that not every Christian is meant to receive. These thoughts do not line up with what it says in Scripture. **Acts 2: 39. 'For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are afar off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him.'**

Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10)

Although Peter had that amazing experience on the Day of Pentecost of seeing about 3,000 people become Christians, he initially had the idea that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was intended for Jews only. Through a vision and a word from God he was shown that this was something that God was not limiting to any one nationality. God sent him to the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Cornelius prayed constantly to God but obviously had no knowledge of salvation through Jesus. In readiness for the arrival of Peter he had gathered his relatives and friends together in his house - people who were Gentiles. (Gentile = Non-Jew) Peter was open to what God had told him to do and as a result of that obedience **ALL** of those who were listening to him preach received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit – even before he had finished speaking! God showed him that both the gospel news and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit were available to people of all nationalities and was not intended solely for the Jews. It is also interesting that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was received at the time of their conversion and not at a later time. Should we expect this to be the norm?

(Acts 10: 44) ‘While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.....and the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God.’

Paul at Corinth (Acts 19)

It is very common, even today, for many, many Christians not to realize that there is more to being a Christian than giving their lives to Jesus. God has so much more for us. We can read about a similar thing happening when Paul visited Corinth. He asked a group of about a dozen Christians if they had received the Holy Spirit and their reply was that they had never even heard about this. Paul laid his hands on them and prayed for them and this is what we read in **Acts 19:6. ‘When Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.’**

Personal benefits

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit obviously has a major impact on the life of an individual Christian. It totally transforms the prayer life and gives a boldness and an empowering that the person did not previously possess. What is written in the Bible is suddenly seen in an entirely new light and has so much more relevance for each of our lives. There is a new enthusiasm for spiritual things and a longing to have a deeper relationship with God. It also becomes extremely important that others who are not Christians are encouraged to commit their lives to Jesus.

Gifts of the Spirit

In addition to the above personal benefits, when the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is received, each person also receives at least one of the ‘Gifts of the Spirit’. In a very clever way God blesses both believers and non-believers through these Gifts of the Spirit. They are given by God for the edification, encouragement and comfort to both ourselves and others. They are not limited to Ministers and Leaders because God sees a unified church where everyone is looking to enhance the lives of others by the use of what He makes available.

Growing Strong – 4 Using the Gifts.