

ETHAN TEMPLE MINISTRIES
TOOLS FOR LIFE
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THE NECESSITY OF SPIRIT BAPTISM IN WITNESSING

The truth of the necessity of the baptism of the Holy Spirit for witnessing is clearly revealed in the New Testament. We see it in the experience of Jesus. Luke describes Christ's water baptism in chapter three of his gospel. He tells us that at Christ's baptism He prayed, and the "Holy Spirit descended" upon Him.

"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:21, 22).

From that time forward Luke says that Jesus was "filled" with the Holy Spirit and ministered in the "power" of the Spirit:

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about" (verse 14).

Before this Spirit-infilling, or baptism, no ministry of Christ is recorded; we are told of no followers being drawn to Him. Immediately after being baptized, or filled with the Spirit, we are told that "there went out a fame of him through all the region round about." After Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit, we read throughout the gospels of thousands responding to His message and ministry. All of Christ's teachings were anointed by Holy Spirit power, which was the result of His being filled with the Holy Spirit, in answer to His prayer at the time of His water baptism:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (verses 18, 19).

“Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost has given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen” (Acts 1:2).

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

Jesus well knew the importance and necessity of Spirit-filled ministry. This is why He told the disciples to wait for the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit before they went forth to proclaim the gospel.

“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” (Acts 1:4, 5).

Jesus went on to tell them that they would receive power to witness when they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (verse 8).

The disciples did what Jesus asked them to do. They waited and unitedly prayed for the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to be fulfilled to them.

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (verse 14).

In answer to their 10 days of praying, the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost and “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost:”

“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” (Acts 2:1 – 4).

What happened next reveals one of the main purposes for the baptism of

the Holy Spirit. God used these Spirit-filled believers to tell of the “wonderful works of God”:

“And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (verses 7 – 11).

God even surmounted language barriers to get the good news of a risen Savior to the Jews who were present on that day. Three thousand responded to Peter’s Spirit empowered sermon:

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (verse 41).

The early church continued to minister under the anointing power of the Holy Spirit. God marvelously worked through these Spirit-filled believers to win many others to Christ:

“Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (verse 47).

These early Christians recognized the urgency of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit in order to live a godly life and effectively witness for their Lord.

Spirit baptism was so important that when many Samaritan men and women had accepted Jesus as their Savior and were baptized in water under Philip’s ministry, Peter and John were sent to meet with them. Soon after their arrival, they laid hands on these newly-baptized believers and prayed for them to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles

and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:12-17).

We see the same priority in God’s call to Saul on the road to Damascus. Christ revealed Himself to Saul in a vision:

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man” (Acts 9:1-7).

Then Christ directed Saul to go to Damascus and wait for further instruction, after which God sent Ananias to Saul to lay hands on him and pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and healing of his eyesight:

“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized” (verses 17, 18).

As a result of the Spirit’s infilling, “Saul increased the more in strength” (verse 22). The word strength is not simply referring to physical strength.

The context indicates that Saul increased in spiritual strength and power in proclaiming the gospel. This spiritual strength and power for witnessing resulted from the baptism of the Holy Spirit he had received when Ananias prayed for him.

Personal Reflection and Discussion

When did Jesus' service for His Father become powerful, and how does the Bible describe His Spirit-baptized ministry?

What did Jesus tell the disciples to do before they began ministering?

What results did the early church have after they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Why did God send Peter and John to the new Samaritan believers, and Ananias to Saul after his conversion?

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