

(Power From on High) 1. the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Lord Jesus Christ

by A.B. Simpson

The Holy Ghost is the source of power for the Christian life and ministry, and it is the same Holy Ghost that wrought in Christ that He has given to the church to perform her works of love and power.

Scripture: Matthew 3:11, Luke 1:35, John 7:37

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Empowerment for Ministry"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the transformative role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus Christ, highlighting the significant shift from the Old Testament to the New Testament regarding the Spirit's presence and function. He explains that while the Holy Spirit was given to select individuals in the Old Testament, the New Testament promises a universal outpouring of the Spirit upon all believers, enabling a personal relationship with God. Simpson illustrates how Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, baptized by Him, and empowered for ministry, setting an example for believers to follow. He encourages Christians to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance in their spiritual journey, asserting that the same Spirit that empowered Jesus is available to all who believe. The sermon concludes with a call to embrace the Holy Spirit's power to fulfill the mission of the church today.

Transcript

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Matt. 3: 11.

These words from the lips of the forerunner intimate that there was to be a great distinction between the old dispensation which he was closing, and the new, which Jesus Christ was about to usher in.

The distinction was to be very marked in connection with the manner and measure in which the Holy Ghost would be poured out upon the people of God and manifested in connection with the work of redemption. The two natural emblems of water and fire are used to denote the difference between the two dispensations.

We have seen that the Holy Ghost was present on earth during the Old Testament age, speaking through the prophets and messengers of God, and working out His divine purpose in the lives of God's chosen agents, and instruments. But the New Testament is preeminently the age of the Holy Ghost, and we might,

therefore, expect that there would be a great and infinite difference. The principal difference between the old and new dispensations, with respect to the presence and manifestations of the Holy Ghost, might be summed up in the following particulars.

1. In the Old Testament, the Holy Ghost was given to special individuals to fit them for special service; in the New Testament, the promise is that the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, and they shall not need to say, one to another, "Know the Lord, for all shall know Him," through the divine unction, "from the least to the greatest." The universal outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon all believers is the striking feature of the New Testament.

2. The Holy Spirit was with men and upon men, rather than in them in the Old Testament. In the New Testament dispensation, the Holy Ghost comes to dwell in us and to unite us personally with God, and to be in us, not only a Spirit of power and a preparation for service, but a Spirit of life, holiness, and fellowship with the Divine Being. It is not the influence of the Holy Ghost that we receive, but it is the Person of the Holy Ghost.

3. This leads us to the third distinction; namely, that under the Old Testament dispensation, the Holy Ghost was not resident upon earth, but visited it from time to time as occasion required. Now the Spirit of God is dwelling upon the earth. This is His abode. He resides in the hearts of men, and in the Church of Christ, just as literally as Jesus resided upon the earth during the thirty-three years of His incarnation and life below.

4. Perhaps the principal difference was this; in the Old Testament age the Holy Ghost came rather as the Spirit of the Father, in the glory and majesty of the Deity, while under the New Testament He comes rather as the Spirit of the Son, to represent Jesus to us, and to make Him real in our experience and life. Indeed, the Person of the Holy Ghost was not fully constituted under the Old Testament. It was necessary that He should reside for three and a half years in the heart of Jesus of Nazareth, and become, as it were, humanized, colored, and brought nearer to us by His personal union with our Incarnate Lord. Now He comes to us as the same Spirit that lived, and loved, and suffered, and wrought, in Jesus Christ.

In a sense, our Master left His heart behind Him, and when the Holy Ghost comes to dwell within us, He brings the living Christ and makes His person real to our hearts.

This must be the meaning of that remarkable passage in John 7: 37, 38, where Jesus said that the Spirit in the believer should flow out like rivers of living water; then the evangelist adds, "The Spirit was not yet; because Jesus was not yet glorified." The Holy Spirit, in the form in which He was to be manifest in the coming age was not constituted until after the ascension of Jesus. Now, He comes to us as the Spirit of Christ. Therefore it, is intensely interesting to us to look at the relation of the Holy Ghost to the person of our Lord in His first baptism and earthly ministry.

This is our present theme. May the Holy Ghost Himself illuminate and apply it to all our hearts!

I.

Our Lord was born of the Holy Spirit. The announcement by the angel to Mary connects the Divine Spirit directly with the conception and incarnation of Christ. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God." Luke 1: 35.

The human mind cannot fathom this mystery -- a holy Christ conceived and born of one who was herself the daughter of a sinful race. We cannot believe in the immaculate Mary, but we can believe in the immaculate Son of God, born of her without sin.

The very fact that she was an imperfect and sinful woman adds to the glory of this mystery and makes it the more perfect type of the experience through which we also come into fellowship with our living Head. For just as Jesus was born of the Spirit, so we, the disciples of Jesus, must also be born of the Holy Ghost; for "except a man be born from above he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

The mystery of the incarnation is repeated every time a soul is created anew in Christ Jesus. Into the unholy being of a child of Adam, a seed of incorruptible and eternal life is implanted by the divine Spirit, and that seed is in itself, through the life of God, holy and incorruptible. Just as you may see in the sweet springtime the little white, spotless shoot, coming from the dark soil and out of the heap of manure, unstained by all its gross surroundings, so out of our lost humanity the Holy Spirit causes to spring forth the life of the newborn soul; and while the subject of that marvelous experience may seem an imperfect being, still he has that within him, of which the apostle has said, "His seed remaineth in him, and cannot sin; because it is born of God." He can sin, but that holy nature implanted in him cannot; it is like its Author, holy, too.

"And so He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Like Him we are born of the Holy Ghost and become the sons of God, not by adoption, but by the divine regeneration.

II.

Jesus Christ was baptized by the Holy Spirit. Not only did He derive His person and His incarnate life from the Holy Ghost, but when at thirty years of age He consecrated Himself to His ministry of life and suffering and service, and went down into the waters of the Jordan, in token of His self-renunciation and His assumption of death, the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost, by whom He had been born, now came down and personally possessed His being and henceforth dwelt within Him.

No one can for a moment deny that this was something transcendently more than the incarnation of Christ. Up to this time there had been one personality, henceforth there were two; for the Holy Ghost was added to the Christ, and in the strength of this indwelling Spirit, henceforth He wrought His works, and spake His words, and accomplished His ministry on earth.

But this also has its parallel in the experience of the disciples of Christ. It is not enough for us to be born of the Holy Ghost, we must also be baptized with the Holy Ghost. There must come a crisis hour in the life of every Christian when he, too, steps down into the Jordan of death; when he yields his will to fulfill all righteousness, like his Master; when he voluntarily assumes the life of self-renunciation and service, which God has appointed for him in His holy will, and when there is added to him, as a divine trust, the Holy Ghost; henceforth it is not one, but two, and then these two are one.

I remember the day when my daughter walked down one aisle of this building, and another walked down the other aisle, and they met at this altar and then they walked back after that simple, solemn ceremony, but not as they came. It was not one person now, but two; yet those two were one, and she leaned her weakness upon his strength and, assuming his name, henceforth looked to him for all the needs of her life.

And so there comes a time when the believer joins his hand with the Holy Ghost, and there is added to his new heart and his Christian experience the mighty stupendous fact of God Himself, and the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

How perfectly this is described in the two sentences in Ezekiel. "A new heart will I give unto you and a right spirit will I put within you." This is the new heart in us. "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My commandments and do them." That is the baptism with the Holy Ghost. And so Peter and the other disciples were born of the Spirit before the day of Pentecost; but Jesus promised them that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost at the appointed time, and when that day was fully come there was added to their true Christian life the divine personality, the infinite presence and all-sufficiency of God, the indwelling Holy Ghost, who had lived and wrought in Jesus Christ.

Beloved, have we entered into this experience? Have we received the Holy Ghost since we believed, or have we allowed our theological traditions and our preconceived ideas to shut us out from our inheritance of blessing and of power? Let us do so no longer. Let us, with the Master, step down to Jordan, enter with Him into death, rise with Him in resurrection life into the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and then go forth in the fulness of His power and liberty, even as He.

Oh, if the Son of God did not presume to begin His public work until He had received this power from on high, what presumption it is that we should attempt in our own strength to fulfill the ministry committed to us and be witnesses unto Him!

III.

No sooner had the Lord received the baptism of the Holy Ghost than He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to "be tempted of the devil." This is especially emphasized by the evangelist. It was not the devil that appeared first, but it was the Spirit. In the Gospel of Mark the language is still stronger, and it is said that he was "driven of the Spirit."

Perhaps His human spirit recoiled from the awful ordeal of the wilderness, as it afterwards shrank from the anguish of Gethsemane, and the Holy Ghost pressed Him forward by one of those resistless impulses which many of us have learned to understand, and for forty days His blessing was challenged; His faith was tested; His very soul was tried by all the assaults of the adversary.

He was brought into certain places that seemed to contradict all that He believed, and to challenge all that had been promised to Him. The devil might well say to Him, "Art Thou indeed the Son of God in the midst of hunger, desolation, and wild beasts, and every form of suffering, cast off and neglected even by God, and left in destitution and desolation?"

And then, amid all these perils and privations, suddenly there opened before Him the vision of power and pleasure -- the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them, if He would but yield a single point and accept the leadership of the enemy, who doubtless appealed to His higher nature and represented Himself as an angel of light, or perhaps approached Him through His own form, and all the visions and possibilities of power He might use for the good of men and the benefit of the world.

These and other more subtle insinuations and instigations came to Him on every side and yet, amid them all, He stood unmoved in His obedience to His Father's will and His reliance upon His Father's word, until Satan was driven from His presence, and He came forth more than conqueror. And so the first thing that

we may look for, after the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is the wilderness with its desolations and privations. Circumstances will surely come to us, which seem to contradict all that we have believed, and to render impossible the promise of God. Even God will seem to have failed us, and when all is dark as midnight, the vision of help from other sources will come to us, and a thousand voices will whisper to us their promises of sympathy and aid, if we but yield a single point of conscience and give ourselves up to the will of the deceiver. All the temptations of our Master will come to us, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, the temptation to take help from forbidden sources, or perhaps to carry even our faith to the extreme of fanaticism and presumption.

All these will come, but if the Spirit has led us up into the wilderness He will lead us out. If we will but lift our eyes above the tempter to the divine Deliverer, we shall find that even Satan shall be compelled to become our ally; and, more than conquerors, like our Master, we shall take our enemy prisoner and make him fight our very battles.

Let us not fear the conflict; let us not shrink from the testing; let us not count it strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try us; let us not see the devil first, but the Lord always above him, and the Holy Ghost in the midst of our being, our Victor and Deliverer. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against Him."

We must first fight the battle in our own soul that we are to fight in the world. David must meet Goliath alone, before he can meet him in the hosts of the Philistines. Jesus must conquer Satan in single combat, before He can go forth to drive him out of hearts and lives. And so we, too, must live out our public service in the private arena of our own spiritual experience, and then repeat our victory in the victory that God shall give us for the lives of others.

Beloved, shall we not trust, through all our tests and trials, and take the Holy Ghost as our Deliverer in the hour of temptation, and our blessed and divine Discipliner, leading us through the ordeal of suffering to the strength of victory?

IV.

We next read that Jesus went forth in the power of the Spirit from the wilderness into Galilee. He was not weakened but strengthened by His conflict, and almost immediately afterward we find Him standing in the synagogue at Nazareth publicly declaring, "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

bind up 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." Luke 4: 18, 19.

Henceforth all His teachings, all His works, all His miracles of power were attributed directly to the Holy Ghost. In the twelfth chapter of Matthew and the twenty-eighth verse, we have a very distinct statement of the connection of the Holy Spirit with His miracles of power. "If I by the Spirit of God, cast out demons, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." That is to say, it is the Holy Ghost that casts out demons in us, and this same Holy Ghost is to remain in us and to perpetuate the kingdom of God in the church through the dispensation.

It is a very wonderful truth that it is the same Spirit who wrought in Christ, that He has given to the church to perform her works of love and power.

This was what the Master meant when He said, "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father." The Holy Ghost in us is the same Holy Ghost that wrought in Christ. We yield to none, in honor to the Son of God. He was truly the Eternal God, "very God of very God." But when He came down from yonder heights of glory, he suspended the direct operation of His own independent power and became voluntarily dependent upon the power of God through the Holy Ghost. He constantly said, "I can of mine own self do nothing." He purposely took His place side by side with us, needing equally with the humblest disciple the constant power of God to sustain Him in all His work. Not that He might be dishonored in His glory and majesty, "For being in the form of God He thought it not a thing to be grasped to be equal with God, but He emptied Himself and made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant."

And so He went through life in the position of dependence, that He might be our public example and teach us that we, too, have the same secret of strength and power that He possessed, and that as surely as He overcame through the Holy Ghost, so may we.

Oh, what a solemn spectacle it is to see the Son of God spending thirty years on earth without one single act of public ministry until He received the baptism of power from on high, and then concentrating a whole lifetime of service into forty-two short months of intense activity and almighty power!

But He has left to us the same power which He possessed. He has bequeathed to the church the very Holy Ghost that lived and wrought in Him. Let us accept this mighty gift. Let us believe in Him and His all-sufficiency. Let us receive Him and give Him room, and let us go forth to reproduce the life and ministry of Jesus and perpetuate the divine miracles of our holy Christianity through the power of the blessed Comforter.

This is the mighty gift of our ascended Lord. This is the supreme need of the church of today. This is the special promise of the latter days. God help us to claim it fully and, in the power of the Spirit, to go forth to meet our coming Lord.

Source:

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