

On the Significance of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Final Outreach to the Jew in the Last Days

by Art Katz

Art Katz discusses the critical role of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in effectively reaching out to the Jewish community in the last days.

Scripture: Acts 1:8, Acts 2:14

Topics: "Baptism Of The Holy Spirit", "Evangelism to the Jewish Community"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes the critical role of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in effectively reaching the Jewish community in the last days. He reflects on the early Church's reliance on the Spirit's power, as demonstrated in the Book of Acts, and challenges contemporary Christians to rekindle that fervor in prayer and outreach. Katz laments the current lack of urgency and depth in prayer among Spirit-filled believers, urging them to embrace the fullness of the Spirit to witness boldly to the Jewish people. He draws parallels between the early Church's experience and today's challenges, stressing that the same Spirit is necessary for impactful ministry. Ultimately, Katz calls for a return to the passionate intercession and bold proclamation that characterized the early believers.

Transcript

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I am becoming increasingly aware of the lassitude of attitude and the neglect in practice of the speaking with other tongues on the part of those 'Spirit-filled' Christians who ostensibly have received the gift. Sincere as we are in our concern for our yet unbelieving Jewish kinsmen, we are rarely led to pray for them beyond the limitation of our natural language. We do not seem to be pressed by the urgency of that need to break out of that recalcitrance especially in the presence of one another. Our prayer is a little better than polite, but still not the gushing or 'groaning that cannot be uttered' that accompanied the intercessions of earlier Pentecostal generations whose crisis of need was evidently greater.

Turning to the earliest accounts in the Book of Acts, we read that the first expression of the gospel to the Jews, the sermon of Peter in 2:14 and following, was preceded by a powerful baptism of the Spirit, the very sound of which brought Jews to the very place of hearing! In chapter 4:8, Peter, responding to the censure of Jewish officialdom, "filled with the Holy Ghost said unto them...Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole."

Note first that "a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem and we cannot deny it" precipitates the encounter. The word of Peter that precipitated the faith to believe by five thousand, was equally a manifestation of "being filled with the Holy Ghost"--so that in fact, the whole witness to the Jewish community on the very heels of the crucifixion for which they are boldly indicted waited upon the advent of the Baptism of the Spirit for which they tarried according to the Lord's final word, "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto Me...Acts 1:8.

Without belaboring the point, though so much more can be said, can we not ask "Shall the age end any differently than by that by which it began?" Is not the resistance, even the vehement Jewish opposition to the gospel greater now than it was at the first? Can we hope to succeed with them on any basis less than what enabled Peter and the early Church? Are present Jewry absolved from the same indictment of the death of their Messiah than those to whom Peter spoke? How many of those hearers were actually present or participant in the Passover crucifixion of 50 days before? Yet they were not absolved of their culpability. Peter addressing as it were the nation, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words," indicates with unsparing boldness a prophetic and Deuteronomic, biblical view of national culpability by which none are spared: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know: Him by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" Acts 2:22-23; see also a repetition in v.36! Needless to say, our present witness is infinitely less than that--as is also the result!

Oswald Chambers in the February 4th selection from My Utmost for His Highest speaks succinctly of our contemporary lapse in the Spirit! "It [the Baptism of the Spirit] is the only thing that matters, and the strange thing is that it is the last thing realized by the Christian worker." He fingers our problem in our failure to "persuade men of the judgment of God, and of the love of Christ"--it is the want of abandonment. "This abandon to the love of Christ is the one thing that bears fruit in the life...The greater number of evangelicals have in my opinion never abandoned themselves to God's Spirit baptism finding often sophisticated and complicated doctrinal explanations to explain or justify the deficit.

But what of those ostensible Charismatic and Pentecostal Christians who are equally void of the Spirit reality? Why are they silent in prayer, constipated in the Spirit and unable or unwilling to groan or give expression to the Spirit in tongues? Is that not the only prayer that can be said to express the mind of the Spirit? How much superior than our best and well-meaning prayers comfortably expressed without embarrassment in our known language? If there is such constraining timidity before each other, with what boldness shall we approach Jews? Chambers adds, "No one can stand like that for Jesus Christ who is not constrained by the majesty of His personal power." Majestic, because it issues from the Throne; as it did on the day of Pentecost--and so also now. What insult to the grace of God to live entire Christian lifetimes in its rejection or neglect.

Chambers concludes: "The love of God constrains us"--"when you hear that note in a man or woman, you can never mistake it. You know that the Spirit of God is getting unhindered sway in that life." My prayer for myself and for all those who bear a burden for the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel is that note will be heard by them in us. Can anything less suffice?

Source:

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