

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost

by Dougan Clark

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is a separate experience from water baptism, designed to consecrate and sanctify believers, empowering them for service and witness.

Scripture: Job 42:5, Isaiah 6:1, Matthew 3:11, Luke 11:13, Acts 1:5, Acts 2:1, Acts 8:14, Acts 10:44, Acts 19:1, 2 Corinthians 12:2

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches about the significance of Christ's Baptism and the distinction between John's baptism of repentance and Christ's baptism of consecration and holiness. He emphasizes that while John's baptism is for the unconverted, Christ's baptism is for Christians, symbolizing victory over sin and imparting entire sanctification. Clark delves into the experiences of various biblical figures like Isaiah, Job, and Paul, showcasing how encountering the purity and glory of Christ led to repentance and a deeper spiritual transformation. He highlights the importance of seeking and receiving the baptism with the Holy Ghost, as a universal blessing for all believers, enabling them to walk in the fullness of the Spirit's power and grace.

Transcript

This is Christ's Baptism. When the son of Zacharias came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, his first message was, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." His second message was, "I indeed baptize you with water, but there standeth one among you whom ye know not; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

I am not writing a controversial work, nor a treatise on systematic theology; but a book, intended to be practical, and to exhibit, in simple language, the offices and work of the Holy Spirit in God's plan of salvation. It is not at all my purpose to discuss the necessity or the propriety of water-baptism, as a so-called Christian ordinance. Not baptism with water, but baptism with the Holy Ghost will be my theme in the present chapter.

I think it proper to remark, however, that two of the Evangelists expressly state that John "preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." This remission, as none can doubt, was experienced by faith, not in John, but in Jesus. Whatever may be our individual opinions, therefore, in reference to the use of water, it is plain that the thing typified and signified by the baptism of John, is precisely what I have already been describing in the second chapter, as the Holy Spirit's work in producing conversion, or

regeneration through "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

If, then, John's baptism means simply the new birth; it follows that Christ's baptism must have a different meaning and a different purpose. John's baptism is repentance and remission; Christ's baptism is consecration and holiness. John's baptism is for the unconverted; Christ's baptism is for Christians. John's baptism is out of Egypt; Christ's baptism is into Canaan. John's baptism is freedom; Christ's baptism is riches. John's baptism is deliverance from punishment; Christ's baptism is victory over sin. John's baptism confers justification upon the sinner; Christ's baptism imparts entire sanctification to the believer. John's baptism gives life; Christ's baptism gives power. John's baptism is the betrothal; Christ's baptism is the marriage. John's baptism is the "washing of regeneration"; Christ's baptism is "the" renewing of the Holy Ghost." John's baptism begins what Christ's baptism consummates, and both are wrought by the agency of the one Divine Spirit.

"I baptize you with water; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." So said John; and Christ's own words to His disciples just before His ascension, are almost identical, "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." He told them to wait for the promise of the Father, which they had heard of Him; and that promise was, that the Father would send, in Jesus' name, the "Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost."

Long before this, on the last great day of one of the Jewish feasts, Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "He that believeth on me," as the Scripture hath said, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And then, that the Church in all subsequent ages might not be left in doubt as to what the Saviour meant by saying that out of the inmost spiritual self of those who believed in Him there should flow rivers of living water, the Apostle puts in a parenthetical explanation, which is exceedingly interesting and important, viz.: "But this spake He of the Spirit, Which they that believe on Him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

Now, no one will dispute that the Holy Spirit has been in the world from the beginning. When primal chaotic darkness invested the void and formless earth and rested upon the face of the deep, even then, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." He inspired the writers of the Old Testament, for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." He came upon individuals at different periods and empowered them for special services, as in the case of Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, David. Notwithstanding these facts, however, it is quite certain, if the above text is to be interpreted according to its plain and obvious meaning, that the Holy Ghost was given to the Church after the glorification of Jesus, and in consequence of the glorification of Jesus, in a sense and to a degree which had never been experienced before. And this is the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

The Old Testament prophecies themselves distinctly mention this baptism as one of the blessings to be enjoyed under the Gospel dispensation. "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." And the well known prophecy of Joel, which was quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost, asserts that the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon sons, daughters, old men, young men, servants, handmaidens. Under the old dispensation, therefore, the Holy Spirit, except that small measure of His influence and light which is given to all men in all ages, was imparted only to certain individuals and on special occasions, but under the Gospel it is God's gracious purpose that the Spirit should be poured out universally and generally upon all His children, and that He should abide with them for ever.

In the sixth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, we find an experience so marvelous in itself, and so clearly foreshadowing the baptism with the Spirit, that I think it proper to allude to it. Isaiah prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. In his first chapter he describes most vividly the sinfulness of the Jewish nation and exhorts them to repentance and amendment of life. He tells them to wash them from their sins, to put away the evil of their doings, to cease to do evil, to learn to do well; and, on condition of their doing so, he promises them, in the name of the Lord, that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." His prophesying at this stage, just like John's preaching and John's baptism, is concerning repentance, amendment of life, and remission of sins.

How long he had thus been a preacher of righteousness before the death of Uzziah, we do not certainly know. But he tells us, "in the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of Him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

Now, who told the prophet that he was a man of unclean lips? Had he not been powerfully preaching to those around him, repentance and the forgiveness of sins? Yes. But when he caught only a glimpse of the infinite purity of Christ (for on this occasion, John tells us that Isaiah saw His glory and spake of Him), his first thought was about his own uncleanness. To get really a nearer view of Christ does not tend to engender pride, nor boastfulness, but, on the contrary, it takes the self-righteousness, and the self-sufficiency, and the self-dependence, and the self-glorification out of a man.

So it was with Job, when the Lord answered him out of the whirlwind; and the patriarch, ceasing to justify himself, exclaimed, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So it was with Daniel, when a wondrous vision was vouchsafed to him, "There remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." So it was with Ezekiel, when "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" was shown to him, "And when I saw it, I fell upon my face." So it was with Saul of Tarsus, when on his journey to Damascus Jesus appeared to him in the way, and he fell to the earth, tremblingly inquiring, "Who art Thou, Lord? What wilt Thou have me to do?" So it was with John in Patmos, when he saw the glorified Redeemer, that same Jesus with whom he had been so familiar on earth as to lean upon His bosom; but now, "fell at His feet, as dead." And, so it was with Isaiah.

But mark what followed. "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Now, no one, I apprehend, will venture to deny that Isaiah was already a forgiven and accepted child of God; and yet, this was to him a new experience. He had received the pardon of his past sins before; but now the iniquity of his nature was taken away, and his in-bred sin was purged. He had known justification before; now he obtained entire sanctification. He had already had the baptism of repentance and remission of sins; but this was his baptism of fire, yes, and of the Holy Ghost.

And is it too much, to believe that we can trace the effects of this baptism everywhere upon the glowing pages of his prophecy? Isaiah is preeminently the evangelical prophet of the Old Testament. He describes the blessings of the gospel dispensation, almost as forcibly and accurately as if he had lived under it himself. How vividly, and how pathetically, does he delineate the vicarious sufferings of Christ. "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." How beautifully does he set before our view, the desert blooming, and the wilderness rejoicing; and the highway of holiness, over which the unclean shall not pass, and in which the wayfaring men shall not err. How grand, and how lovely, are the visions, in which, looking down the centuries before him with the eye of a seer, he recognized the future glory of the Church, and calls upon her to, "Arise, shine, for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord has arisen upon thee."

Let us now return to the Apostles. They were commanded not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. The eleven, together with the converts--male and female--in all, one hundred and twenty, assembled in an upper room, and "continued, with one accord, in prayer and supplication." From the best calculations we are able to make, they must have continued to hold these daily prayer meetings for seven, or possibly ten days, before the promise was fulfilled. If the vision tarried, they waited for it. "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."

We need not wonder that the effect was marvelous. The multitude of Jews, "out of every nation under Heaven," assembled together at the strange news, and, hearing unlearned men--and shall we not say women as well?--speaking the wonderful works of God in their different languages, could only look into each other's faces and exclaim, "What meaneth this?" While others, mocking, said, "These men are full of new wine." Then Peter arose, quoted in their hearing the prophecy of Joel, preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection, assured them that what they heard and saw, was the baptism of the Holy Ghost--the promise of the Father shed forth by the Son--and exhorted them, with wonderful success, to accept the offers of salvation through a crucified and risen Lord.

Again. When, at a subsequent period, in obedience to a heavenly vision, Peter went and preached the gospel to Cornelius and his household, the Holy Ghost fell on them also, and they spake with tongues and magnified God. As this is not an argumentative work, I shall waive the question of the propriety and necessity of the administration--under Peter's direction--to these Gentile converts of baptism with water, after they had received the baptism with the Holy Ghost. But thus God made choice among the Apostles, that through Peter's instrumentality, the door of faith was opened to Gentiles as well as Jews; and I see no reason to reject the views maintained, I think, by Dean Alford, that, (in a certain subordinate sense), the Church universal, composed of Jew and Gentile, was founded upon Peter as one of the "foundation stones," himself founded upon Jesus Christ, "the chief corner-stone," and having added to himself on the day of Pentecost, three thousand living stones beside. There is nothing in this remark, if rightly interpreted, to give the slightest countenance to the errors and assumptions of popery. The true rock upon which the Church is built, can be none other than the "Rock of Ages." "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus."

On the day of Pentecost, then, Christ's baptism was poured out upon the Church of the hundred and twenty. It was given to Christian believers, to converted persons, to those who had already accepted

Christ in the pardon of sin. So, he of them had been followers of Jesus almost from the beginning of His public ministry--a period of more than three years. Some, probably, had been only recently converted. But all alike received the Holy Ghost. And it is worthy of notice also, as showing the diversities of operations by the same Spirit, that the three thousand persons who were added to the Church on that remarkable day, probably, all received this baptism with the Spirit co-instantaneously with, or immediately after, their conversion. The power of the Lord is not to be limited in any way, and, although in most instances Christ's baptism is not received until some time subsequent to the new birth, yet this is not always, nor necessarily, the case. The work may be cut short in righteousness, and the newly regenerated soul may be baptized at once with the Holy Ghost.

Sometime after the martyrdom of Stephen, we are told that Philip, the deacon, went down to Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. Immediately a great revival began. "The people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake." They accepted the glad tidings of salvation, they believed in Jesus, they were baptized, both men and women. But this was not Christ's baptism. For "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." Then we have another most important parenthesis, showing very distinctly that to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus--that is, to accept Him in repentance and remission of sins--is one thing, and to receive the Holy Ghost in His baptizing power, is another, and a very different thing. "For as yet," says the evangelist, "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."

Philip, we cannot doubt, was an anointed minister of Christ and a successful revivalist, but it was not given to him to be the means of imparting the Holy Ghost. For that impartation, the laying on of Apostolic hands, was, in this instance, required. But it was not always so. Paul himself received the Holy Ghost through the instrumentality of Ananias, and Apollos through that of Aquila and Priscilla. The power of conferring the Holy Ghost on believers was given, but not confined, to the Apostles; nor do I read anything, or know anything, about an "apostolic succession" in this or any other regard.

I have mentioned Apollos. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, therefore, he must have been a converted man. He knew only the baptism of John, therefore, he had not received the baptism of Christ. But after Aquila and Priscilla had expounded to him the way of God more perfectly, and he had received the knowledge of Christ's baptism, and, no doubt, the baptism itself also, then "he helped them much which had believed through grace; for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ." In addition to his gifts of culture and eloquence, he had received power when the Holy Ghost came upon him.

I presume it was twelve of the converts made by Apollos, when he knew only the baptism of John, whom Paul found at Ephesus, and to whom he addressed the question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" I shall not enter into any argument about the translation of this passage, since, whatever be the translation, it clearly shows that to believe was, in the mind of the Apostle, one thing, and to receive the Holy Ghost was another. So fully was this distinction understood in those days, that it seems probable that some such question as the above was very commonly asked by the apostles when they met with strangers who claimed to be believers. After these twelve men had candidly confessed that they had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost, and Paul had explained to them the difference between John's baptism and that of Christ, he laid his hands upon them, and they also received the Holy Ghost-- "spake with tongues and prophesied."

And if the inquiry were made in our own day, whether of individual believers, or of the Church as a whole, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" would not the Church, as such, and the great majority of its members, have to confess, like the Ephesian converts: We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost, so far as His baptizing power is concerned. We have not known Him to fill us; to cleanse us; to energize us; to abide in us. And yet, what says the Lord Jesus? "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Oh! when will the individual Christian, and when will the Church at large, learn the simple lesson--"Ask and receive?"

In the chapters that are to follow, it will be my endeavor to show what were the essential features and characteristics of the Pentecostal baptism. At present I will merely observe that the sensible miraculous phenomena which were manifested on that occasion, did not constitute those essential features and characteristics.

The principal miraculous power exercised by the disciples, and observed by the multitude, was the ability to speak in unknown tongues. Now, the gift of tongues; whether it means the power to speak in actual existing languages which the speaker had never learned, or whether it implies the giving forth of ecstatic utterances, not to be found in any language, and requiring a special gift of interpretation to understand it, was--like the word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge, and the power of healing, and extraordinary faith--one of the gifts of the Spirit, conferred by Him upon some, and withheld from others.

Christ's baptism, on the other hand, was the gift of the Spirit Himself and was designed for the Church universally, and every individual member of it in all ages. When Peter stood preaching on the day of Pentecost, with the new power of the Spirit upon him, the wondering multitude "were pricked in their heart," and said unto Peter and the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said unto them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." That is the first step in the way of salvation, and means simply the experience of the new birth. But he continued, "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Here we have another and a different experience--that of the baptism with the Holy Ghost--and the positive assertion, that it is for every Christian; because most assuredly every Christian is one whom the Lord our God has called.

Let no one, therefore, suppose for a moment that the baptism with the Holy Ghost was a blessing granted only to Apostles, or to others only in the Apostolic age. On the contrary, it is the privilege of every believer to the end of time. Beloved reader, say then, It is for me, and, by the grace of God, it shall be mine.

The formula for a New Testament believer, whatever his name might be, whether Peter, or John, or Paul, or Barnabas, or Stephen, or Silas, was, "a man full of the Holy Ghost;" and the same formula ought to express, and does express the true Christian now. Not but that there are many true Christians, who have not yet received the Holy Ghost since they believed; but that all ought diligently to seek Him until they do receive Him, and that only thus can they enjoy the "fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."

Nor has the Church, in any century of its existence, been without at least a few men and women who were "filled with the Spirit." So it was with Tauler, and the Friends of God, in the middle ages; so it was with such pious Roman Catholics as Fenelon, Thomas a Kempis, Lady Guyon, and Catherine Adorna; so it was with the Reformers of the sixteenth century; so it was with the Protestant Martyrs of England and other

lands; so it was with the Moravians; so it was with the Covenanters; so it was with the early Friends; so it was with the early Methodists; so it is now with thousands of individual believers among the various sects of Christendom. God does not leave Himself without witnesses to His great salvation; and, even in the very darkest nights of apostasy, and in the fiercest storms of persecution, He reserves to Himself seven thousand who do not bow the knee to Baal, nor kiss his image. These are men baptized with the Holy Ghost; men full of the Spirit; men of whom martyrs are made in days of trial; and men whose light shines most sweetly and attractively in the days when the churches have rest.

If, as I have remarked, the miraculous phenomena attending the baptism received by the Church on the day of Pentecost are not to be confounded with the baptism itself, we need not be surprised if such sensible manifestations are sometimes absent.

This baptism does not come to all in the same way, though its effects are alike precious in all. With some it is a Pentecostal effusion--the rushing of a mighty wind; the whirlwind and the earthquake, prostrating everything before it, and causing its recipients to speak with new tongues and glorify God, while the multitude wonder or scoff. With others the blessing comes in moments of quiet calm; when all outward commotions have ceased; when the faculties of the soul are hushed, and restful, and expectant; and it comes as a still, small voice, whispering to the inward ear, and diffusing a sweet and tranquil joy through the whole spiritual being. In either case it is the Holy Ghost, and we are to receive Him in the way of His coming. "The wind bloweth where it listeth."

The following quotation is from Fletcher: "But, if the Lord be pleased to come softly to thy help; if He make an end of thy corruptions by helping thee gently to sink to unknown depths of meekness; if He drown the indwelling man of sin by baptizing, by plunging him into an abyss of humility; do not find fault with the simplicity of His method, the plainness of His appearing, and the commonness of His prescriptions. Nature, like Naaman, is full of prejudices. She expects that Christ will come to make her clean, with as much ado, and pomp, and bustle as the Syrian General looked for, when "he was wroth and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper." Christ frequently goes a much plainer way to work, and by this means He disconcerts all our preconceived notions and schemes of deliverance. Learn of Me to be meek and lowly in heart, and thou shall find rest to thy soul--the sweet rest of Christian perfection, of perfect humility, resignation and meekness.

"If thou wilt absolutely come to mount Zion in a triumphal chariot, or make thine entrance into the New Jerusalem upon a prancing horse, thou art likely never to come there. Leave, then, all thy lordly misconceptions behind, and humbly follow thy King, who makes His entry into the typical Jerusalem, meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, yea, upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

In the light, and the joy, and the purity, and the power of the Pentecostal baptism, the disciples walked till the day of their death. It was never repeated to them. And yet, on one occasion afterwards, the place was shaken where they were sitting, "and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness."

The power of the Spirit continuing in them constantly after the day of Pentecost, as a latent force, was brought into active exercise whenever it was required. They were specially energized for special emergencies, but the Spirit was with them all the time; yes, and in them. And so we must conclude that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is, in each case a definite experience, realized once for all, and not to be

expected again and again; but there may be many successive girdings and fillings, according to God's free grace and the believers individual need, as well as the service to which he may be called.

Remarks

1. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is the promise of the Father, and the gift of the Son.
2. This baptism is an experience distinct from, and subsequent to the new birth, but, in exceptional cases, the one may be imparted in immediate connection with the other.
3. The Scriptural expressions: "baptized with the Holy Ghost," "the Holy Ghost fell on," "was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost," "Holy Ghost came," "Holy Ghost was given," "received the Holy Ghost," are used in reference to believers, and are precisely synonymous.
4. Christ's baptism does not always come in the same way, nor exhibit the same phenomena, either to the consciousness of the recipient, or to the observation of others.
5. This baptism is not one of the gifts of the Spirit, but the gift of the Spirit Himself.

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