

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

by Richard E. Bieber

Richard E. Bieber's sermon emphasizes the necessity of being baptized in the Holy Spirit for a transformative Christian experience.

Scripture: Acts 8:14

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about sensible religion, emphasizing the need for a deeper spiritual awakening beyond just attending church and following religious routines. He highlights the story of John the Baptist shaking up people's complacency, leading them to realize that something more is missing in their lives. Through the example of the Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit, he explains the transformative power of being baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire, which opens our ears to God's voice, teaches us to pray, gives us new tongues, and anoints us with a new kind of love.

Transcript

"Hey! I'm a Christian! I go to church. What's your problem? These people who come along and act like they've got something I don't have, like they know something I don't know. Like they've got God, and I don't. They make me sick!

First of all, religion is a personal thing. Right? Maybe I don't talk about it. Maybe I don't make a big production out of it, like some people do. But I've got my beliefs. And when my time's up, I'm as ready as they are to face my Maker.

Besides, what does anybody really know about God? I mean, where's the proof? Have you seen any angels lately?"

It's called sensible religion. You go to church. You try to treat people right. You believe in the Bible --- up to a point. And you get on with your life.

That's pretty much how most people in Israel felt 20 centuries ago. They were religious. Probably more religious than we are. But they were busy getting on with their lives, dealing with how to survive ... how to deal with the problems we all have.

...Until the day this guy, John the Baptist came along. You went down to the Jordan to hear him and you got shook up good! Maybe there is more to it than I thought. Maybe I do need to make some changes.

Maybe there is something missing in my life.

People were getting baptized. People were coming to faith like they never had faith before. You could call it a spiritual awakening.

When God chooses to awaken you spiritually, suddenly all that complacency is shocked right out of you. You look at your sensible religion and you're like the Emperor with no clothes. All the time you thought you were covered! But now, in the light of this new thing that God is doing to you, you know you need something more.

I go to church. I try to treat people right. I believe in the

Bible --- up to a point. But still, something is missing.

These people who went out to hear John the Baptist --- even after they repented, even after they went down into the water --- knew that something was still missing.

As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Luke 3:15-17

John is saying, "What you folks are looking for, I cannot give you. What you need is coming from One so holy, I'm not worthy to untie his shoes. He's going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And then, when he's ready, he's going to cleanse the earth of all evil. He's going to clear his threshing floor: the wheat into his granary, the chaff into the fire."

You who are reading these words know that you have a hunger for more than you now have. More of something which only God can give you. You would not have read this far if the hunger wasn't there.

But what is it that we're looking for, thirsting for?

"I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Has this happened to you? If it has, you will be the first to say, "I need more of the Spirit! I need a fresh outpouring!"

If it hasn't happened to you yet, here's what you're missing....

In the beginning this gospel was an entirely Jewish thing. Jesus was Jewish. The disciples were all Jewish. Every book of the Bible --- New Testament and Old --- was written by a Jew. Jesus had commanded them to take the word out to all nations, but they hadn't figured out how to do that yet.

Suddenly there was persecution. The believers scattered from Jerusalem to keep from getting killed. Philip went up to Samaria and started witnessing to Samaritans. To his amazement and joy, they drank in his words. People were healed. Demons were cast out. Philip baptized men and women in droves!

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14-17

The Samaritans had come to faith. They had been baptized in the name of Jesus. But they needed one more thing: the power to live the new life, the power to walk by faith. This they received as Peter and John ministered to them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So what happened to these people after they received the Holy Spirit? How were they different from what they had been before?

They were different in four ways:

Their ears were opened to the voice of God.

The Spirit within them began teaching them to pray.

They received new tongues.

They were anointed with a new kind of love.

Their ears were opened to hear the voice of God.

"Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught."

"My sheep hear my voice."

When the Lord baptizes you with the Spirit, your ears open. Maybe you're singing a hymn, perhaps you're alone in your room reading in the book of Psalms, or you may be having coffee with a friend. A word is spoken, and you know that what you just heard is no ordinary word. It could be a word of hope, a word of encouragement, a word of warning. But you know where it came from, and you know what you are going to do.

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth."

He will speak, and you will hear.

The Spirit within them began teaching them to pray.

Nobody knows how to pray until the Spirit begins teaching them. When Jesus taught the disciples to pray his very words were Spirit and Life. And when he poured out the Spirit upon them, the Spirit kept teaching them. And when the Lord pours out the Spirit on us, the Spirit teaches us from within.

The Spirit prays within us, and soon we join in and start praying too. Prayer becomes a major activity of our daily life. We simply need to pray. To give thanks. To intercede for people by name. Daily.

They received new tongues.

This organ of speech which can do so much good...and so much harm...now comes under the lordship of the Spirit. Hence, on the Day of Pentecost they spoke in other languages as the Spirit gave them

utterance. In the Church at Corinth they spoke in "tongues." In Ephesus "they spoke in tongues and prophesied." All this indicated that the Spirit had taken charge of the organ of speech, helping it to clean up its act.

We find that the Spirit convicts us every time we badmouth our neighbor, gossip about our enemy. He also gives us boldness to speak up in situations where we were formerly too cowardly to speak. Under the Spirit's anointing our tongue becomes an instrument of power.

They were anointed with a new kind of love.

A new kind of love: God's love. It's more than a feeling. It's beyond emotion. You simply know that you are loved personally by the living God, flooded with his love for you. Your cup overflows. God's love spills out of you as a generosity toward others, as forbearance, as patience, as forgiveness. It creates an atmosphere.

God's love in you overflows and blesses the people around you. It heals. It spreads peace. God's love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

This is what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Today we do not have to wait for Peter and John to come down from Jerusalem to impart this gift to us. It's here for us now --- both for those who have never tasted it, and for those who will never stop thirsting for more.

This is the one gift Jesus left behind, when he returned to the Father. He left no relics, no writings, no shrines, no monuments. But to those who draw near and open their hearts to receive, the Lord Jesus, from the Father's throne, gives this gift.

As you read these words, the Lord Jesus is present to flood you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. All you have to do is ask.

The Samaritans received this gift through the laying-on-of-hands.

Paul received it through the laying-on-of-hands.

Cornelius and his friends received the gift by simply listening to the Word.

Jesus put it this way:

"If you, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

Luke 11:13

This is one gift the Father never fails to give to those who ask.

So what are you waiting for?

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