

The Second Blessing?

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

Review

Before we plunge ourselves too deeply into the details of this third part of the subsection of Remedial Christianity (which I have titled *How Come I Never See a Miracle?*), let us do a quick review so as to not lose the big picture.

First, it is my initial assertion that Christians should not expect miracles—at least in the way we saw them performed by Jesus or the apostles.

I am not suggesting that God doesn't heal in a response to prayer. But He may *not* heal. When Peter, however, was confronted by the lame man at the temple asking for alms, Peter did not pray for his healing and wait for a (possibly negative) response from God. He simply declared, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," and *immediately* the man was healed (Acts 3:1-11). There was no way that man was not going to be healed.

A miracle is something supernatural. We are not talking about amazing coincidences, the beauty of childbirth or something wondrous or astonishing. Hodge defines a miracle as something that,

...take[s] place in the material world, i.e., in the sphere of observation of the senses...and...[is] produced or caused by the simple volition of God, without the intervention of any subordinate cause.¹

In other words, the podium rises to the ceiling without strings or anything else helping it except the Word of God Himself. Walking on water is done without skis, sufficient speed, or any flotation device. Water becomes wine without the necessary interval of time or additives. People speak languages they were never taught. People heal others by the mere word of their mouth. People know things without having received the knowledge through ordinary means. And all of this can be observed by anyone with the required senses of observation—whether they have faith in the miracle worker or not.

Second, we discussed why there were miracles performed in the Scriptures—they confirmed the authoritative message of the miracle worker. So if we're going to believe in the perpetuity of miracles we also must believe that the canon of Scripture is still open.

Third, we briefly discussed the principles for cessation—the ceasing of certain types of events or actions we see in Scripture. There is the *accomplished* work of redemption and the *applied* work of redemption. Those things which relate to the accomplished work of redemption should not be thought of as normative for the history of the church. These things include the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and pouring out of the

¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, Volume 1*, (Eerdman, reprinted 1989), p. 618.

Spirit of Christ. The applied work of redemption would include preaching, sacraments, church discipline, non-miraculous gifts, etc.

Fourth, we briefly discussed the baptism of the Holy Spirit versus the baptism of fire.

Fifth, our current topic, is addressing the error of believing in the second blessing of the Holy Spirit or subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit—which was accompanied by miraculous things. My argument is that this is to be included in the accomplished work of redemption.

Sixth, we will finish this portion of the series with an examination of the flagship passage used to argue for the continuation of these miraculous activities (especially tongues) in the church, 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Goals

Let us also remember our goals in this study. We have a goal of unity which can only come when there is a common source of knowledge and authority. I cannot possibly have unity with someone receiving their own secret messages from God to which I have no access. We also have a goal of avoiding the stratification which necessarily follows a view of Christianity which has spiritual and carnal Christians.

We have a goal of avoiding the dangers of unintelligible Christianity. The claim that the mind can be by-passed in our communications with God is a very dangerous pursuit. There is no better way to defeat an enemy than to get them to quit thinking.

In short, what's at stake here is *sola scriptura*. Let us not underestimate what a glorious gift God has given us in the Scriptures. In them, and in them alone, we have access to the mind of God. The propositions are clear and authoritative above all authorities. And since *sola scriptura* is at stake, the unhealthy (even if not malevolent) manipulation of God's people is at stake as well. For God's people find themselves (as in Roman Catholicism) in confusion, and sometimes at odds, with their spiritual leaders who claim apostolic authority.

God rescued His people from this oppression during the Reformation but, like the Israelites, we find ourselves disobediently crying out for a king.

The Second Blessing

Currently we are examining whether or not Christians should expect the same subsequent pouring out of the Holy Spirit (whereby which miracles are granted) as the uniform Christian experience throughout history. Is Pentecost part of the *accomplished* work of redemption (like the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ) and not expected to be repeated, or is Pentecost part of the *applied* work of redemption (like the preaching of the gospel or baptism of the Lord's Supper) which extends throughout history?

I've been arguing that Pentecost is part of the accomplished work of redemption. It is that aspect of Christ's work where He pours out His Spirit to bring to remembrance, to His apostles, all that He taught (John 14:25). The message, as we learned last time, was confirmed by their ability to perform signs and wonders. When God had determined the message complete, the canon of Scripture was closed and the accomplished work of redemption was completed. The pursuit of this second blessing, therefore (and at very least), is a fool's errand.

Examining the Stratifying Assertions

But, worse than it being a fool's errand, it brings an unhealthy and unbiblical stratification to the church causing great insecurity and frustration to its victims. The

levels of stratification, having examined the General Council of the Assemblies of God, were numerous:

Some (not the Assemblies of God) believe tongues is the necessary fruit of salvation; this stratification is *Christian versus non-Christian* (this being the logical necessity of Pentecostal exegesis—since all believers at Pentecost, at some level, participated in speaking in tongues).

The less dramatic stratification, according to the Assemblies of God, is observed by, 1) those who have the Spirit and therefore a supernatural access to the mind of God (with gifts of prophecy and tongues) versus those who do not; 2) those who are serious about their faith versus those who are not; 3) those who have a warm heart versus those who do not; and, 4) those who are doctrinally sound enough to receive the blessed experience versus those who do not, and so on.

There is an even less dramatic distinction among those who, though perhaps not claiming to have any sign gifts per se, live under the impression that they have intimate access to God that is either unavailable to, or less efficient in, others. These are people who, aside from the Scriptures and revealed providence, view their own wisdom and discernment (though these might be gifts from God) as direct information from God. It is one thing to be gifted by God with compassion and easily discern a brother in toil. It is quite another thing to interpret that gift as prophetic information from God.

A Subsequent Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We have discussed how all seven accounts of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; 1 Corinthians) are *indicative* and not *imperative*. This is to say that there is no exhortation to be baptized by the Holy Spirit, rather there is an indication of what would, or did happen. So seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit (an idea very prominent in Pentecostalism) is foreign to Scripture.

We learned that the subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit was always superintended by the Apostles. We learned that the baptism of the Holy Spirit involved the securing of the message of salvation in the Scriptures with Apostolic authority—a single event not to be repeated. This event (a baptism of revelation) is inextricably attached to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

We learned that when Jesus was fully glorified (John 7:38, 39) He would pour out His Spirit to remind the Apostles of all He taught them with infallible accuracy. He would also grant them to perform signs and wonders to confirm the message.

Acts 1

Having seen all the preparatory remarks for the coming of the Spirit, we now look at the event itself.

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ²until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. ⁴And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; ⁵for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many

days from now.”⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”⁷ And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:1-8).

Examining the opening words of Luke we see, again, specificity in who is being addressed. Jesus had given commandments, through the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, to whom He had presented Himself after His suffering by infallible proofs. He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the Promise of the Father at which time they would receive power and be His witnesses in Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

This passage is often thought to be applied to the power expected by every Christian as they seek to fulfill the Great Commission. And in one sense I would agree. To the extent that the Christian is presenting a gospel consistent with the Apostles, the power is there. But we make a critical hermeneutical² error when we assign to ourselves that which was unique to the Apostles. And arguably, at least in some sense, they were actual witnesses to the ends of the earth.

And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5).

A Historically Unique Subsequent Experience

Let us go back to our goal of understanding the subsequent experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. With all this information as our backdrop we can understand this baptism as part of the accomplished work of redemption—namely a revelatory aspect of redemption. The accomplished work of Christ would not be much help to His church without their knowing about it—without the Scriptures.

In a very intimate setting the Apostle received the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them (John 20:22). In a more public, and international, setting the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost producing the miraculous ability to proclaim a message in foreign languages (more on this later).

But it did not end there. Continual affirmation of apostolic authority took place as the Apostles went out from Pentecost and laid their hands on others who were not at Pentecost. The promise was made to the Apostles, the power was given to the Apostles, and during the apostolic age there was the subsequent pouring out of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the Apostle’s hands. In an undiminished capacity (in terms of signs, wonders, and message), the power and authority of Christ was conferred to His Apostles.

Hopefully we see the sense of this. It is by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that we all have access to the Word of God. It is part of the accomplished work of redemption and we have all benefited by it. This comports well with Scripture and makes sense of why we don’t see miracles today the way we do in Scripture.

As I said before, if I am wrong about this I am more than willing to repent for it is the very mind, power and Spirit of God at stake. Let’s now examine what concessions need to be made in order for the Pentecostal view to be correct.

² Hermeneutics are the principles of how to interpret the Scriptures.

Trying to Make it Work

Let us now seek to answer some of the assertions made by the General Council of the Assemblies of God as they try to make their system work.

It is quite in order, assuming the presence of proper understanding, to lead a new convert into the baptism in the Holy Spirit. While "tarrying" (waiting on God in prayer) is often necessary for heart preparation and understanding, it is not improper for new believers to move quickly into the fullness of the Spirit.³

There is no indication that "tarrying" in anticipation was anything but being at Jerusalem (Luke 24:49). To suggest it means waiting on God in prayer is a fabrication. The General Council states,

Is there proof that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit experienced today is genuinely biblical?

The proof is the same proof that supported the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. On that occasion the apostle Peter stood up and defended the outpouring by showing that it was a fulfillment of Scripture. He began his explanation by saying, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). What we are experiencing in our day is that which was prophesied by Joel and which began to be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

A comparison of the Book of Acts with what is happening in the modern outpouring of the Spirit reveals striking similarities in pattern and purpose. The impact of the early church, newly equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit, changed the world of that day. Similar changes are being made in human lives today through Spirit-filled servants of God. Christ is preached. Sinners are saved. The sick are healed. The kingdom of God is greatly increased. We can say, with Peter, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel," though we have not yet seen the full extent of the spiritual awakening for which we are praying.⁴

As discussed earlier, the proofs offered in Acts were signs and wonders done by the hands of the Apostles. There are very few genuine similarities between what was happening in Acts and what is happening in today's Pentecostal churches when you consider the raising of the dead and establishment of the canon of Scripture. The fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel was a once-for-all fulfillment. It is exegetically questionable to extend a singular historically fulfilled prophecy into history. And since Joel's prophecy included revelation, *Sola Scriptura* is lost.

Who should be baptized in the Holy Spirit?

When the believers were assembled in prayer on the Day of Pentecost, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). Not one was left out. It was not just the apostles who were filled, but also all the men and all the women in that company of 120 persons. Then the apostle Peter addressed the onlookers and told them that they should be filled.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

He said, "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off -- for all whom the Lord our God will call"(Acts 2:39).

As Peter said, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is for every believer in every generation. It is an all-inclusive promise of universal dimension. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is promised to every Christian believer.⁵

Where does Peter say that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is for every believer in every generation? It is the Abrahamic Covenant (promise) that is promised. If it is indeed promised to every Christian believer to be baptized by the Holy Spirit (remembering it is always in the indicative and not imperative), why does not every believer have it (at least according to the Pentecostal view of it)?

Why are some people baptized in the Spirit immediately, while other[s] seek so long without receiving the experience?

Just prior to His ascension, Jesus told His disciples, "In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). Some 20 days later they were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). Earlier the Lord had said, "I am going to send you what my Father promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). No doubt the disciples obeyed this directive; they remained in Jerusalem and spent much time in prayer. There was a "waiting" for the Spirit to come. However, once the Spirit had fallen there was no further incident of "waiting" or "tarrying." Today there is no longer any reason for waiting, except as "waiting" may relate to the preparation of the heart for the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Some believers have received the Baptism almost immediately; others have waited for various periods of time. Why? (1) Because the Holy Spirit is sovereign, He will move and work only as He chooses. (2) Because the Holy Spirit does not impose himself on any believer, some will require a period of waiting before they are prepared to yield themselves fully to His divine control. (3) Because "filling" may involve a process, there are some believers with an authentic baptism in the Spirit which may have been preceded by wonderful and meaningful times of waiting in God's presence. Seekers should realize that any period of "waiting" only brings them closer to the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon their lives.⁶

All these answers are foreign to the accounts of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. Granted He (the Holy Spirit) will move and work as He chooses, but this seems inconsistent with their explanation that the person has not yet fully yielded himself to His divine control. Who *has* ever done this? That is quite a high standard! Of course the Holy Spirit certainly did impose Himself on those who were under the preaching of Peter and Paul.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word (Acts 10:44).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
⁶And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:5).

The Council continues,

When an individual is seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit, can anything be done to prepare his life or environment that will quicken the infilling?

The question is often asked: "What can I do to claim the promise of the baptism in the Holy Spirit for my life?" One thing the believer should do is to seek the Baptizer rather than the Baptism. It is Jesus who baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit. Seekers should focus their attention on Him rather than on an experience. There are other steps that, if taken, will assist seekers. (1) Understand that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift from God. It should be received with gratitude and giving of thanks to the Giver. It cannot be earned or merited. It can only be accepted with an open and willing heart.

But did we not just learn that the failure to yield oneself fully to His divine control would inhibit the process? Is this not a system of merit?

(2) Be fully persuaded that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is both biblical and doctrinally correct.

Is not this a bit manipulative? Doctrinal accuracy was never a prerequisite for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

(3) Confess any known sins in your life and resolve to live a righteous life with God's help.

I thought this was what you had to do at conversion. Confession of sin and personal righteousness was never a prerequisite for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When the people were greatly amazed at Peter's power,

Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk (Acts 3:12)?

(4) Begin to worship the Lord with expressions of praise and adoration.

Is this not a result of the filling of the Spirit rather than a means to acquire it?

(5) Express to the Lord, who is the Baptizer, a desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit for His glory.

Never in the Scriptures are we called to do this.

(6) Yield to any deep "welling up" within your spirit and allow that inner surge to break through in expressions of worship, praise, and adoration in a language unknown to you but meaningful to God.⁷

⁷ Ibid.

This is perhaps the most dangerous aspect of Pentecostalism—the dispensing with rational thought and succumbing to the inner surge. This sounds strangely similar to Paul’s warning to Timothy where there will be false teachers taking advantage of those led by various impulses (2 Timothy 3:6).

Conclusion

The baptism of the Holy Spirit (as seen at Pentecost) was a unique historical event. Its design was to confirm the once-for-all message of the gospel and should not be sought as the normal Christian experience throughout history. The shoddy exegesis utilized to make this system work should stand as a warning to Christians.

Unfortunately we live in a day and age of irrationalism and anti-intellectualism in the church. What we have left to guide us are inner surges and various impulses.

Justification by faith, the blood of Christ, the cross of Christ, divine satisfaction—glorious concepts—have been lost. May we repent of this neglect and bring the glory of the cross back into His church.

Questions for Study

1. Define the accomplished versus applied works of redemption (page 2).
2. In what respects can division be harmful/necessary in the church (page 3)?
3. How does the Pentecostal view of the baptism of the Holy Spirit stratify the church (pages 3-8)?
4. Is there evidence in the Bible of a subsequent experience for Christians of the Holy Spirit (pages 7-9)?
5. How is the baptism of the Holy Spirit a baptism of revelation (page 3)?
6. How are many of the events in Acts historically unique (pages 5, 6)?
7. Discuss the arguments given by the General Council of the Assemblies of God (pages 5-8).