

The Greatest Life Ever Lived

A Study in the Incarnate Life of Jesus Christ and An Exposition of the Four Gospels

LESSON XIX: THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	related passages
3:11,12	1:7,8	3:15-18		

Lesson Overview

The scene this week follows immediately upon last week's lesson. John the Baptist has made his appearance, preached, denounced those who came resting in the false assurance of their Jewish heritage, and is now affirming to the people his position in relation to the One he is heralding.

Lk 3:15 *And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; : That there was an expectation for the Messiah is clear from Zachariah's, Simeon's and Anna's message of hope (Lk 1:76-79; 2:25,26,38). Now one appeared who was evidenced by self-denial, preached a message of conversion, and demanded a change to the children of Abraham themselves, evidenced by water baptism. It would be difficult to imagine the devout Jews not thinking John may be the Messiah Himself. John stopped this thinking immediately by comparing what he was doing with what the One to come is about to do. So great was this difference that John felt unworthy to even untie Jesus' sandals. Wuest: *and since the people were in a state of expectancy, and all men were reasoning in their hearts concerning John whether perchance he could possibly be the Christ...**

Matt 3:11a *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:*

Mk 1:7 *and preached, saying, There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.*

Lk 3:16a *John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose:*

The contrast between John and Jesus was the difference of:

- **who He was**, Jesus having superior majesty, "mightier than I"
- **what He did**, Jesus having superior activity, "I baptize with water but He baptizes with the Holy Spirit"

As illustrative of Jesus' superiority, John used a then-common custom: when a master would return home weary from travel and with dusty sandals, his servant / slave would try in every way to make his master more comfortable. Honored guests would be included in this, and to omit this was cause for criticism (Lk 7:44-46). "Palestinian teachers were not paid, but pupils used to show their appreciation with a variety of services. A rabbinic saying (in its present form dated c. 250 but probably much older) runs, 'Every service which a slave performs for his master shall a disciple do for his teacher except the loosing of his sandal-thong'. Untying the sandal-thong was just too much. But John selected precisely this duty, which the rabbis regarded as too menial for a disciple, as that for which he was unworthy. This is genuine humility." [Morris, *Luke*] "So what may very well be implied here are three ascending degrees or stages of humility: (a) the disciple is willing to render almost every service. (b) the slave or humblest servant is willing to render every service. (c) the Baptist considers himself unfit or unworthy to render the service of untying his Master's sandal straps." [Hendriksen, *Mark*]

Note Mark the servant alone mentions the bending down to loosen the straps.

to bear: according to Gk scholars, this is used in the Gk vernacular to mean "I am not worthy to take off"

Matt 3:11b *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:*

Mk 1:8 *I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.*

Lk 3:16b *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:*

For the meaning of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, see below. The reference to fire has been taken to mean:

- **the Holy Spirit, "the fire of the Spirit,"** of which it was pictured on the day of Pentecost with flames above the heads of believers (Acts 2:3). Fire both illumines and cleanses, which so does the Holy Spirit.
- others to mean **testing**, "testing as through fire"
- others to mean **personal judgement**. Morris states he likes the judgement in the context best, but says the same people who are baptized by the Spirit is as well with fire, saying the two are governed by one *en* (translated "with") in the Greek. "It seems best to see John as thinking of positive and negative aspects of Messiah's message. Those who accept Him will be purified as by fire (cf. Mal 3:1 ff) and strengthened by the Holy Spirit." [Morris, *Luke*] While fire typically refers to

wrath, it also is used to indicate a work of grace. A.B. Bruce makes the same observation concerning the Gk preposition but arrives at a different conclusion. He makes no reference to Pentecost in discussing the baptism of the Holy Spirit but rather says both this baptism and fire is judgmental. [Bruce, *Gk NT*]

- others to mean the **future universal judgement**: “It would appear from the context (both before and after; see [Matthew] verses 10 and 12) and from Joel’s Pentecost prophecy (Joel 2:30; cf. Acts 2:19), considered in *its* context (Joel 2:31), that the ultimate fulfillment of the Baptist’s words awaits Christ’s glorious return to cleanse the earth with fire (2 Pet 3:7,12; cf Mal 3:2; 2 Thes 1:8).” [Hendriksen, *Matthew*]

An interesting alternative is a point brought forth by Hendriksen: could not the reference be both positive (the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost) and negative (the final judgmental wrath of God)? “Often in Scripture fire symbolizes *wrath*. But fire is also indicative of the work of *grace* (Isa 6:6,7; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:3; 1 Pet 1:7). It is not strange, therefore, that this term can be used both in a favorable sense, to indicate the blessings of Pentecost and the new dispensation, and in an unfavorable sense, to indicate the terrors of the coming judgment day. It is Christ who both *purifies* the righteous and *purges* the earth of its dross, the wicked. Moreover, if the Old Testament prophets would often, by means of *prophetic foreshortening*, combine the events pertaining to Christ’s first coming (taken in its comprehensive sense, including even Pentecost) with those of the second, why cannot that same feature be ascribed also to the style of John the Baptist, who resembled these prophets in so many ways? It is clear, therefore, that the case for the interpretation according to which the word *fire* here in [Luke] 3:16 refers both to Pentecost and to the final judgment is strong.” [Hendriksen, *Luke*; italics his]

Matt 3:12 Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Lk 3:17 Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable.

Winnowing was done by having a floor is prepared, either naturally or man-made. If natural, it was the surface of a flat rock on the top of a hill, exposed to the wind. A man-made winnowing floor was about 30-50 feet in diameter which was prepared by clearing the soil of stones, wetting it down, and then packing it hard and smooth. It sloped slightly upward along the rim, and was surrounded with a border of stones to keep the grain inside. First the sheaves of grain (barley or wheat) are spread out and threshed by oxen pulling a sled studded with stones on the bottom. This would separate the grain from the stalks. What was left was chaff (the remains of the kernel’s hard outer shell, dust, dirt, small pieces of straw) which would be winnowed out by tossing the threshed grain into the wind. The grain would fall straight down since it was heavier while the chaff is blown away.

The dividing of the righteous and the wicked is the work of the Lord. *Spirit* in the Gk is often translated wind, and on several occasions the work of the Holy Spirit is likened to the wind (Jn 3:8; Acts 2:2). If the reference to fire is that of judgement (as I believe it to be), the sense of this could be: “*There is One coming who will immerse you in the Spirit and fire. As the farmer separates his grain, the wind (Spirit) separates the righteous from the wicked, gathering the righteous for eternal bliss and the wicked for everlasting judgement.*”

The grain is gathered into the garner, the granary, the place where things are put or stored away because it is valuable. This of course pictures the believers in the final stage of our glorification. Scriptures refer to this in many different ways: the death of the believer is precious in the sight of the Lord (Ps 116:15), as being carried away by angels into Abraham’s bosom (Lk 16:22), going to Paradise (Lk 23:43), a blessed departure (Phil 1:23), as being at home with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8), death is a gain (Phil 1:21), better by far than this present life (Phil 1:23), and a falling asleep in the Lord (Jn 11:11; 1 Thes 4:13).

fan: refers to the shovel used for throwing the corn into the air to clear it of the chaff. Wuest: *whose winnowing fork is in His hand, whose winnowing-shovel is in His hand.*

The word translated *thoroughly purge, thoroughly cleanse* is intensive, the picture being of a farmer beginning at one side of the floor and working through to the other, cleansing as he goes. The idea is that the winnowing does not stop until the threshing floor has been thoroughly cleared. As mentioned in the last lesson, **the final judgement is:**

- **imminent (the One to come has the winnowing shovel in His hand)**
- **complete (He will thoroughly purge His floor)**
- **divisive (He will gather the wheat into the garner but the chaff burned)**
- **eternal (the chaff will burn with unquenchable fire)**

What was saved is precious (gathered into the garner) but what burned was without worth (the chaff: the unusable outer part of the shell, dust, dirt, pieces of straw). This is not to state any person is without worth, for Jesus says a man’s soul is worth more than the entirety of this present world (Mt 16:26). But without Christ that soul is an enemy of righteousness and to die in that state of rebellion is to have one’s soul cast away eternally in a place which Jesus would later compare to the city trash heap (gehenna, the eternal lake of fire). A precious eternal soul wasted, thrown away as worthless garbage.

The Gk word for unquenchable is *asbestō* from which we get our English word asbestos (with a different meaning).

Is the fires of hell literal or spiritual? I agree with Hendriksen: “Though the idea of a fire which in some sense is physical need not be excluded, yet according to Scripture the literal sense does not exhaust the meaning. Everlasting fire has been prepared ‘for the devil and his angels.’ Yet these are *spirits* and cannot be hurt by literal fire. Moreover, Scripture itself points the way to the symbolical meaning; i.e., to the divine *wrath* resting upon the impenitent, and consequently, to their anguish (Deut 9:3, 32:22; Ps 11:5,6; 18:8; 21:9; 89:46; Isa 5:24,25; Jer 4:4; Nah 1:6; Mal 3:2; Mt 5:22; Heb 10:27; 12:29; 2 Pet 3:7; Rev 14:10,11; 15:2).” [Hendriksen, *Matthew*]

Lk 3:18 *And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.* : The word for preached is the word *gospel* or the good news. It’s important to realize that even John’s harsh words of judgement is part of the good news. Wuest: *now, many and various things, as he was exhorting, he brought as good news to the people.*

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

A summation of current beliefs:

- ***a second work of grace*** which is blessed upon certain seeking believers while available to all. This is one of the teachings which characterize the Charismatic movement and is widely held among those ranks. The effects of this varies according to the teachers: a closer spiritual walk, tongues, the eradication of sin, etc. Some even believe the Christian does not have the Holy Spirit until this baptism. How to receive this second blessing is also taught variously: obedience, prayer, repentance, humility, sinlessness, self-purification, yielding, emptying, “leaving all”, being fully consecrated, tarrying, abandoning, or simply by asking in faith.

While some may experience a momentous turning point in their spiritual walk, the scriptures do not teach a second blessing as such. (It must be mentioned that some who have received this “second blessing” have later walked away from it all. Obviously the blessing was not enough to completely change anything.) All Christians “receive” the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation (Rom 8:9) in which the believer is sealed unto the day of our final redemption (or glorification, see Eph 1:13,14). Although the Lord promises to continue His work which He begun to conform the believer to Christ (Phil 1:6; Rom 8:28-30; 1 Jn 3:1,2), the amount and rate of growth is to a degree conditioned by our submission to the will of the Spirit. This is described as being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18) which is a continuous, repeated condition, the key words being surrender, submission, obedience, and faith. “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way...”. The fact this is a *daily* experience must be emphasized. I only wish there was a one-time once-for-all experience which would do the job.

- ***a baptism into the mystical body of Christ*** is very widely held among non-Charismatics. The basis of this is the invisible mystical church which is just as widely accepted to have begun at Pentecost. Without trying to over-simplify the teaching, essentially the belief is that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit “came” and created an invisible universal church composed of all believers. Any person subsequently saved is then baptized into this universal (encompassing all including those in heaven) invisible (because it is spiritual and therefore cannot be seen) body of Christ. The baptism is therefore for all believers and occurs at the moment of salvation.

Some of this teaching is fact and personally I would mainly differ in semantics (the wording of what is being said). It must be remembered that the Holy Spirit, being omnipresent, has always been here and has always been working (constraining sin, teaching, saving, etc). This would not be denied by most of those who believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit involves the universal church, I just believe it is important to be reminded of those facts. Therefore when the Holy Spirit “came” it refers to a special work (perhaps a better word would be “empowering”) which He is doing during this present age. The scriptures do not teach a universal invisible church (to be discussed in later lessons) but rather that each believer is immediately made part of the family of God at the moment of salvation. That which the universal invisible people would call a “church” is more accurately called either the kingdom of God or better still, the family of God. So it is not so much *what* they are saying that I disagree with as it is *how* they are saying it. The greatest damage of what is being taught here is a degradation of what the local church is within the scriptures.

- ***a baptism which empowers believers and accredits the local church*** during this present age is a typical belief among many Baptists, especially in our circles.

Points in support of our teaching:

- ***the baptism in the Holy Spirit is directly connected to the day of Pentecost.*** Note:
 - The phrase is first used by John the Baptizer as given in this lesson (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16). All three verses are parallel and speak of the same instance.
 - Possibly within a few months as John introduces Jesus after His wilderness temptations, John makes reference to the same instance (Jn 1:33). The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not mentioned again in the gospels (although some believe this is referenced by Jesus in speaking of the Spirit, Jn 14-16).
 - Immediately prior to Jesus’ ascension after His death / resurrection, Jesus tells His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit not many days from then (Acts 1:5). Jesus then ascends into heaven and ten days later is Pentecost.

■ The only other instance this is directly mentioned is by Peter in the house of Cornelius (Acts 11:16,17). Some believe the events in Samaria with Peter and the apostle John is another occurrence of the baptism (Acts 8:14-17). Ron Crisp adds the incident of Paul in Ephesus as possibly another time of the baptism (Acts 19:1-7) [Crisp, *Study on Holy Spirit*]. The minimum that may be said therefore is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was once for the Jews (Acts 2) and once for the Gentiles (Acts 10). Anything else is conjecture.

■ Note Paul considered the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a past event in his early preaching days. In Acts 13:24-27 when Paul is preaching in the synagogue at Antioch he refers to the passage mentioned in today's study but deliberately leaves out the part of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If one would argue that this does not definitively state the event was historically past, it must at least be admitted the issue was not of importance to Paul at that point. Compare that with the Charismatic teaching concerning all believers seeking this baptism.

● **the baptism in the Holy Spirit was never sought but sovereignly bestowed.** In Acts 1:5 Jesus uses the passive voice meaning the disciples were to be acted upon by another (in this case, the Lord). At Cornelius' house the Lord immersed the Gentiles in the Holy Spirit even as Peter preached, evidencing to the prejudiced Jews that the Lord could even save Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48). Important to remember:

■ *there is not a single verse outside of the gospels, Acts and 1 Corinthians which directly refers to the baptism in the Holy Spirit*

■ *there is not a single verse commanding anyone at anytime to seek for this baptism in the Holy Spirit*

● **the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an historic event not a present experience.** In 1 Cor 12:13 the word for *baptized* (translated in KJV *for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*) is in the aorist passive tense, denoting a past event. Wuest is better: *by means of one Spirit we all were placed into one body*. If Paul had wished to stress the baptism in the Holy Spirit was a continuing event he would have used a different Greek tense. What Paul is teaching in that chapter is that there are no divisions in the local church according to our gifts. By virtue of what the Lord did on Pentecost by immersing us all as one body, the ear cannot elevate itself above the nose, nor the eye above the foot (we are all familiar with the passage). The body spoken of is the local assembly of believers, the Corinthian body being mentioned directly by Paul in the same context (1 Cor 12:27). The word is passive as well, again denoting the fact that the baptism was the work of the Lord acting upon believers. Even the non-Baptist Hendriksen says this: "However, according to Christ's own words (Acts 1:5,8), remembered by Peter (Acts 11:16), *in a special sense* this prediction was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost and the era which it introduced." [Hendriksen, *Matthew*, italics his]

● **the baptism in the Holy Spirit gave accreditation to the local assembly as being the primary means of worship in this present age.** Consider the history of worship:

■ from all observations in the books of Genesis and Job, **early worship was family oriented** with the father fulfilling what we might consider the role of the priest.

■ As the Lord chose and taught His nation of Israel, the center of worship became **the tabernacle**. This was built from the heavenly design (Heb 8:5), the Jews gathered the materials necessary to build (Ex 25-27), the sacrifice was offered (Ex 40:29), and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Ex 40:34,35). This cloud led the children of Israel but only on that one occasion is it mentioned that it so filled the tabernacle that Moses could not even enter therein. While the Lord is omnipresent, in a special sense it was in the tabernacle that the people met with the Lord (Ex 25:21,22).

■ After nearly 400 years David decides to build a **temple** unto the Lord. Being a man of blood, the Lord forbade David but allowed him to gather some of the materials (2 Sam 7; 1 Kings 7:51; 1 Chron 22:8,14), the temple was built (1 Kings 6,7; 2 Chron 3,4), the sacrifices were made (1 Kings 8:5; 2 Chron 5:6), and the glory of the Lord came down and filled the temple (1 Kings 8:10,11; 2 Chron 5:13,14).

■ This glory of the Lord left the temple due to the people's sins. The temple is destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonians and the times of the Gentiles begin. The Jews are taken into captivity and **synagogues** emerge as places of worship, being the predecessor to the church.

■ John the Baptist arrives preaching the coming of the Messiah and gathering the material for the first church (Acts 1:22), Jesus builds **His assembly** of worship during His earthly ministry (Mt 16:18; 18:17), the ultimate sacrifice is made upon Calvary (Mt 27; Mk 15; Lk 23; Jn 19), and the glory of the Lord came to accredit this new form of worship (Acts 2).

■ The church's time of existence is drawing nigh to ending. Although the particulars are unclear, it seems there will be a **millennial temple** (Ez 40-42) which again will be immersed in the glory of the Lord (Ez 43:1-6). However the worship in the millennium will be, it will eventually fade into the glory of eternity when all sin will be cast aside and the Lord will reign with His new humanity, consisting of the elect angels and elect out of mankind.

“So when Jesus had built His church, antitype of tabernacle and Temple, the Holy Spirit came down to accredit, empower

and occupy it (Acts 2:1-33). In other words - The baptism in the Holy Spirit was the baptism of the church - the house that Jesus built to succeed the house that Solomon built, as that had succeeded the house that Moses built.... Because the old Temple had served its day, the very hour Christ said, 'It is finished,' referring to the expiation of sin by the true Lamb of God, 'the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom.' The new Temple was ready, waiting for its anointing on the day of Pentecost." [B.H. Carroll, *Interpretation of English Bible*]

The accreditation of the organized assembly of believers is an important point which is unfortunately misused by those on both sides of the fence: the universal-invisible church believers deny this truth entirely while many Baptists beat it to death! To loosely quote one Baptist missionary: ***"Many Baptists have fought the local church battle so much and have come up the 'loser' many of those times that they tend to fight even when there's no battle."*** We should pray for a **balanced Baptist point-of-view that cherishes the doctrine of the local church for its practical values rather than as a point of pride and arrogance.**

The practical ramifications of this teaching is that *we need our churches*. It is not that the church is the only place we can worship, for it is not. As the Jews could worship the Lord outside of the tabernacle and away from the temple, it was still in those places that the Lord uniquely manifested His presence to His people. Jesus instructs us as His disciples to gather ourselves together in organized assemblies in which His teachings are brought forth and He is honored, magnified, praised and worshiped. ***During this present age it is in these assemblies that He has promised to manifest Himself in a special way,*** just as in the temple of old. ***If a believer refuses church attendance, one of two things typically happen: either that person will become so backslidden that he will not know if he is lost or saved; or he will become so self-righteous that he cannot look at Christian activities without finding fault with every little thing.***

● **the baptism in the Holy Spirit empowers us today.** While it is important that we recognize the relationship between the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the day of Pentecost and the Christian assembly, the emphasis Jesus placed upon the event must not be overlooked. Jesus connected the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5) with a definite result of the coming of the Spirit: power from on high to live and witness for Jesus (Acts 1:8). Again, an issue unbalanced by many: *the Charismatics seek such power in an historical non-repeated event and are misled, while many Baptists glory in the knowledge of the truth while living defeated lives.* The illustration may be given of dams in desert areas. Massive dams are built which control the flow of water, preserving the environment and using the water's energy to provide electricity. But from that dam flows irrigation channels, piping life-giving water to remote areas across the desert. ***So it is with the day of Pentecost: the day is a historic event which we are not to seek, yet the power given that day is as available to us as it was to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem that day. We have the power of Pentecost, not through seeking but by surrendering.***

This is also an area which demands balance, and I'm not sure of the answer or where the line is drawn. The baptism in the Holy Spirit accredited the local church and empowered these assemblies to do the work of the kingdom. *But it is an error to limit that power to the church. Both men and functions have acted outside of the Lord's assemblies and God has blessed these efforts.* William Booth did a wonderful work in starting the Salvation Army, although we all may disagree with some of his practices and beliefs. The Gospel Mission in Dayton (or the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago) is outside the realms of the local church. Thomas Cranmer played a key role in the Reformation but was an Anglican. George Whitefield was a Calvinistic Methodist yet was used of the Lord in America's Great Awakening. Martin Luther, John Calvin, Zwingli, William Tyndale, John Wycliffe, none of which was Baptists yet greatly used of the Lord. Look how the Lord is using some in the radio ministries yet many of these are not underneath the authority of a local church. I cannot agree with the response of some Baptists that "these may be great in man's eyes but it's not how the Lord sees it" (I cannot help but wonder if that is not said to convince the one that is saying it). *Someplace there is a balance that the local church is the primary means God has ordained to use in this age, yet the power of His Spirit is upon those whose heart is fully surrendered to the will of God.*