

The Spirit's Baptism

By G. L. Densmore

"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: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: 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." (Matt. 3: 11, 12)

No doctrine in the New Testament is taught more plainly in regard to Christian experience than is the baptism with the Holy Ghost. John the Baptist promised that this mighty baptism of the Spirit would come upon the church. He told the multitudes whom he baptized "unto repentance" that there was another and deeper experience for them, and it would come through Him whose shoes the Baptist felt unworthy to bear. Then Jesus repeated the promise to His little company of believers telling them to wait for the promise of the Father, "which," saith He, "ye shall receive, not many days hence."

Even the prophet Joel prophesied that this rich experience would be the heritage of believers in this dispensation when he said, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28).

Peter quoted this passage on the day of Pentecost to the multitude who ran together to see what all the commotion was about in that upper room when the one hundred and twenty disciples were baptized with the Holy Ghost.

In considering this subject attention is called to the following questions: Is this experience for Christians today? What does the baptism of the Holy Spirit do for us? What is its relation to our Lord's return? How and when may the Holy Spirit be obtained?

First.—Is the baptism of the Holy Ghost for us today? Assuredly it is. No one can read the Bible with an open heart and unprejudiced mind and not be convinced of this truth. There are some who say the Holy Ghost baptism was only for the "apostolic age," but there is no such term as "apostolic age in the Scriptures. A certain doctor in the South asserted to an old colored sister that there was no Holy Ghost. The good sister replied, "Yo' means dey is no Holy Ghost as yo' knows ob."

A Spirit-filled brother was discussing the baptism of the Holy Ghost with a skeptical church member who said that only two men since the days of the Apostles had received the Holy Ghost. The good man ended the argument by saying, "Well, bless God, I am one of them. Can you tell me who the other one is?"

What did Peter say to the multitude who gathered to study the strange phenomenon of the first Pentecostal outpouring? He said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, 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." Has that call ever been withdrawn? No! Thank God! It originated in Jerusalem nineteen hundred years ago and has been reverberating around the globe ever since, and I am persuaded it will never stop this side of our Lord's glorious appearing.

The call to receive the Holy Ghost began

at Jerusalem and spread over Judea and Samaria then up to Asia Minor where the Ephesians heard the call. After this it leaped across the Aegean Sea, then on to Rome where there were saints in Caesar's household. On down through the centuries, the dark ages, and the reformation period the call was heard. Later the Wesleys heard the call, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and went all over England spreading the good news. Then across the Atlantic the call was heard, and many received this gracious endowment of power, including Charles G. Finney and Dwight L. Moody, two of the greatest evangelists since the days of St. Paul. Moody and Finney both testified to the reality of the baptism with the Holy Ghost; both witnessed to the joy and blessing that swept over their souls until they felt constrained to ask God to stay his hand because they could not endure any more of the mighty movings of the Spirit upon them.

Second.—What does the baptism of the Holy Spirit do for us? How may we know we have received it? Jesus, Himself, answers this in Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The disciples were to receive power to witness.

All great soul winners have been spirit filled. The baptism of the Holy Ghost was the witness required by the early church for its ministry. Not scholastic acquirements, not theology, not culture, but divine dynamic, spiritual power! If early Christians had been like many churches of today they would have asked, "Is he a good mixer? Does he take well with the young people? Can he make good after dinner speeches? Does he preach nice sermonettes thus giving the choir and the soloist all the time they desire?"

What did the Pentecostal Church require? They demanded Spirit-filled men who had a passion for lost souls, men who were bold and fearless, with the unction and power of the Holy Ghost upon them.

The record reads, "Look ye out seven men full of the Holy Ghost and faith." Such men were Stephen and Philip; the latter, alone and single-handed, with the help of the Spirit was able to produce a mighty Holy Ghost revival in prejudiced and almost unapproachable Samaria. Afterwards Peter and John came down to Samaria. What for? To pray for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost for as yet He was fallen upon none of them.

The obtaining of this experience was expected of all young converts subsequent to their conversion in the early days of the church. Better for us if it were universally the same today.

The great need of our country right now is a Holy Ghost baptized ministry and laity. Why are the Protestant denominations showing a loss of membership annually rather than a gain? They lack the dynamics of the Holy Ghost. We read that Barnabas, "Was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and faith"—as a result, "Much people were added unto the Lord."

Oh, the powerless, fruitless ministry that is seen everywhere! Even many so-called "Fundamentalist" minister, in their preaching, can

HONOR THY PREDECESSOR

Like an evil spirit which must be driven out before the minister can succeed is the unspoken assumption, "My predecessor was a moron!" Of course this assumption would never be put in words, but it is nevertheless real with some men as they approach a new task in a new field of service. This assumption is by no means confined to the ministry; neither is it unknown among ministers.

Surveying his new field, the inexperienced new pastor may exclaim within himself, "What a wonderful field, what a wonderful church, what a wonderful people, what a wonderful challenge! How could my poor predecessor have accomplished so little! Look at the stupid failures, the stupid omissions, the stupid procedures, the stupid neglect of opportunities, the stupid choice of persons in places of responsibility! Surely my predecessor was no organizer, or the church would be functioning more effectively! Surely he was not much of a pulpiteer or the attendance would have been better! Surely he was not a man of vision or he would have led his people out in a more challenging program! Surely, my predecessor was a moron!"

But wait! A year passes. It is "Blue Monday." The church life has lost some of the momentum which comes with the use of a new broom. The church is discovering that the "wonderful" new pastor is, after all, only a man; and to the pastor it is becoming apparent that the "wonderful" people are likewise made of flesh and blood! The "wonderful" church, like other churches, is beset with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and the "wonderful" field is like ancient Ephesus in that "there are many adversaries!" For the first time the pastor begins to wonder if his predecessor might not be excused for some of his failures, in the light of these difficulties.

Another year passes. Gradually the pastor begins to understand why his predecessor did certain things and left others undone. He even wishes that he might talk some things over with his predecessor. This feeling grows as time goes on.

And now comes the traditional "Three-year rub." Pastor and people have become thoroughly acquainted. The question now is whether there is enough grace in the hearts of the pastor and people to bear with the deficiencies, imperfections, and infirmities of one another. If so, a new era of spiritual progress lies ahead. And what about the pastor's predecessor? Let the pastor tell the story: "My predecessor—no, he is not a moron at all, but a man of intelligence, of consecration, and of zeal, whom I highly esteem and whose good work I am earnestly endeavoring to match!"—Charles W. Koller in *Evangelical Beacon*

go down the deepest, stay down the longest, and come up the driest. They are as dry and dead as many of the "Modernistic" ministers whom they criticize.

The Scriptures teach that we are sanctified by the Word, by Faith, by the Blood, and by the Holy Ghost. This does not mean that a believer's heart is cleansed from sin by four separate processes; rather, the four work in unison. The Theologian would express it thus: We are sanctified instrumentally by the Word; efficaciously by the Blood; conditionally by Faith; and executively by the Holy Ghost. The Word tells you how to receive it; Faith is the condition you meet; the Blood atones for your inbred sin. —Wesleyan Methodist