

The Baptism of the Spirit

by G. Campbell Morgan

The baptism of the Spirit is the primary blessing, regeneration, the initial miracle of regeneration that souls are baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: John 3:5, Acts 1:5, Romans 6:3

Topics: "Baptism Of The Spirit", "Regeneration"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the true meaning of the baptism of the Spirit, clarifying that it is synonymous with regeneration and not a second blessing as often misunderstood. He explains that the baptism of the Spirit occurs at the moment of conversion, marking the believer's entrance into a new life in Christ, while the filling of the Spirit is a subsequent experience. Morgan stresses the importance of understanding these distinctions to avoid misconceptions that can hinder spiritual growth. He argues that every believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit from the moment of their new birth, and that waiting for the Spirit is a misunderstanding of God's readiness to bless. Ultimately, he calls for a recognition of the miraculous nature of regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every believer.

Transcript

IN dealing with these matters of the Spirit, it is wise to keep, as far as possible, to the terms of the New Testament; and it would be an enormous gain if they were used only as they are used in Scripture. The term the baptism of the Spirit has been very generally misunderstood, and therefore misapplied. It has been used as though it were synonymous with the filling of the Spirit; and, consequently, some persons speak of the baptism of the Spirit as a second blessing. They teach that it is necessary to ask for, and to wait for, and to expect this baptism of the Spirit, as something different from and beyond conversion. That is a view utterly unauthorized by Scripture. The baptism of the Spirit is the primary blessing; it is, in short, the blessing of regeneration. When a man is baptized with the Spirit, he is born again. There is, however, an essential difference between that initial blessing and the blessing into which thousands of God's people have been entering during recent years--the difference between the baptism of the Spirit and the filling of the Spirit.

In the majority of cases in the experience of believers, the filling of the Spirit is realized after the baptism. They are identical in the purpose of God, but there is a difference in the experience. So important is it that Christian people should have a clear understanding of what the baptism of the Spirit really is, that it will be well to review the whole of the passages in the New Testament in which the words are used, in order to a

correct appreciation of the true significance of the phrase.

John . . . when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, said unto them . . . 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 Spirit and with fire.

John . . . preached, saying . . . I baptized you with water; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh He that is mightier than I, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire?

John answered them, saying. I baptize with water: in the midst of you standeth One Whom ye know not, even He that cometh after me, the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose. . . . And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not.- but He that sent me to baptize with water, He said unto me, Upon Whomsoever thou shall see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit.

It is more than remarkable, it is almost startling to discover that the Gospels which chronicle the life and ministry of Christ, have no account of this baptism of the Spirit, save the prophecy of His coming uttered by John the Baptist, who spoke of it as something beyond himself, his message, and his age.

What the baptism of the Spirit is may be gathered from the word of the Master to Nicodemus: Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The inference is, that if a man be born of water and the Spirit, he can enter into the kingdom of God. But follow the words still further: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Except a man be born of water and the Spirit is a passage about which there is great diversity of opinion. The Master is here linking His own teaching and dispensation to the teaching and dispensation that is concluding with the mission of John. The water baptism is the baptism of John, and the Spirit baptism is the baptism of Jesus, the gift of life. That which is symbolized by the first is necessary, for repentance must precede life; but the baptism of the Spirit is the gift of life by which a man is admitted into the kingdom of God.

In the Gospels, John standing as the forerunner, declared: I indeed baptize you -with water; but there cometh He that is mightier than I ... He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Years passed, John's ministry was ended, the earthly ministry of Christ was ended, the Cross and Resurrection were accomplished facts. Jesus now stood amid His disciples, and before He ascended on high He said to them: John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. There had been as yet no baptism with the Holy Spirit; and, consequently, these men gathered around Christ had not yet entered into the final relationship with Him that characterizes the Christian dispensation, and forms the holy catholic Church. They had been the disciples of a Jewish Messiah; but now that relation was passing away, and the living Lord in resurrection glory was about to pour upon them the baptism predicted by John. Christ took up the words of His forerunner, and claimed that they were to be fulfilled in the experience of these men: John indeed baptized with water--that is as far as they had gone at

the moment; but the greater blessing was coming--ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If then God gave unto them the like gift as He did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God? Peter, in giving an account of the conversion of Cornelius, declared that these men were baptized with the Spirit when, as he preached, they believed on Christ. The teaching of both these passages evidently is, that the Spirit's baptism is that by which men pass into the new relationship. In both places a contrast is drawn between the baptism of the Spirit and the baptism of John, showing that the baptism of the Spirit was the power which took men beyond the legalism of the old dispensation into the vital relationship of the new.

Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so -we also might walk in newness of life. This is the only direct reference to the baptism of the Spirit in the Letter to the Romans. Certainly the baptism referred to is the Spirit's baptism, for surely no man is baptized by water into the death of Christ. Water baptism may be a symbol of the great fact that a man has passed from death unto life, but the baptism by which men are actually brought into relationship with the death and the life of Christ is the baptism of the Spirit; and it is quite evident that in this argument of the Epistle a reference is made to the beginnings of spiritual life--to the initial blessing, to the blessing of regeneration.

For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free Here again the reference must be to the moment when men entered the Church of Christ; and the statement is that then they were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. Faith was the condition of the baptism by which these people put on Christ and became sons of God, that baptism being, undoubtedly, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

One Lord--the object of the sinner's faith; one faith --centred upon the one Lord; one baptism--the baptism of the Holy Spirit, by which the sinner becomes the Lord's; one God and Father--the new relationship that God bears to the sinner when, baptized by the Spirit, he passes into the place of adoption. Here baptism takes its place at the beginning of the Christian life, immediately succeeding faith in the revealed Lord, and succeeded by the new relationship to God.

. . . When the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also in the antitype doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peter says that in the days of Noah the people were saved by water; and that men are saved to-day by that of which water is a figure--that is to say, men are saved by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This is a review of the whole of the passages in the New Testament that refer to the question of the baptism of the Spirit. In every case the reference is, not to some blessing subsequent to regeneration, but to regeneration itself--to that supernatural miracle by which a soul passes from darkness into light, out of death into life, from the thralldom of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of a child of God.

This sweeps away the view that the baptism of the Spirit is a second blessing. There is absolutely no warrant in the whole teaching of Scripture for such view; and therefore there is, further, no warrant for the popular and prevalent idea that the Holy Spirit must be asked for, or waited for.

Referring to the oft-quoted words of the Master, If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? it has already been shown that these words were spoken while He was fulfilling His work as the Jewish Messiah to Jewish disciples. They never asked, and therefore never received the Spirit through their asking. He came in reply to the asking of Jesus, upon the ground of His finished work. The Spirit is never given in answer to human asking; but upon the ground of repentance and faith, man is baptized therewith, and from that moment the Spirit of God takes possession and dwells within. The believer may check Him, hinder Him, thwart Him, and grieve Him, but from the moment of the new birth he is a temple of the Holy Spirit. It is, then, in the initial miracle of regeneration that souls are baptized with the Holy Spirit.

On the same ground it is not right that Christian people should profess to be waiting for the baptism of the Spirit. The words, Tarry.... until ye be clothed with power from on high, have no application to newborn souls at all; or if they have an application, it is one that is a sad revelation of a condition of life that dishonours the Lord. If men have to tarry until endued with power, it is not because God has not given the Spirit, but because there is something in the life which will not let the Spirit work. Every believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit; and if there be tarrying, it is on account of some disobedience, and not on account of any unreadiness on the part of God to bestow full blessing upon all His children. Such tarrying is not the waiting of man for the Spirit, but the waiting of the Spirit for man.

There are certain passages in the Acts of the Apostles which are used to show that the gift of the Holy Spirit or the baptism of the Spirit is subsequent to conversion.

Philip went to Samaria and preached there; people believed in Jesus, and were baptized in His name. After that the apostles visited these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is asserted that people believe on Christ and are baptized; but the Holy Spirit has to be received as a second blessing.

Carefully notice what actually took place. Philip came to Samaria, preached in the name of Jesus, and men believed in some intellectual sense, and were baptized. Among the number was Simon Magus. It is impossible to distinguish between Simon Magus and the rest, because the statement that Simon Magus believed is as distinct as is the statement that the others did so, and the Scriptures as distinctly state that he was baptized because he believed, as that the others were baptized because they believed. But when the apostles came, Peter thus described Simon Magus: Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. . . . For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. As to the others, Peter unfolded to them the full meaning of the Gospel message, and those that heard it received the Holy Spirit. None of them had received the Spirit, and therefore none of them were born again. These people of Samaria, it must be remembered, held the Jewish view of Messiahship, and their

belief in Jesus, was in Him as having come for the establishment of the earthly kingdom. They had given an intellectual assent to the story of Jesus, and, having believed it, had consented to go through an outward form and ceremony; but not until the apostles came, and the Spirit of God fell upon them, were they members of the Church or converted souls.

Again, the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is used in the same way: And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, Who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened. Concerning this case there is certainly room for doubt. The probability, however, is that the procedure is in harmony with all the rest, and that Saul was arrested and convinced of the kingship of Jesus on the road to Damascus, but did not enter into the Church by regeneration until the fuller light came from the instruction of Ananias. Even if it be granted that there were certain people who believed in Jesus, yet did not immediately receive the Holy Spirit, it must be remembered that cases like these are not to be found in the subsequent story of the Acts.

The passage most often used in this way is the question Paul addressed to certain people at Ephesus: Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? The Authorized Version, with less accuracy, translated it: Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed? This, it is alleged, gives a clear case of people who had believed and yet had not received the Holy Spirit. But here again the facts of the case must be carefully examined. Paul came to Ephesus, and found there a little company of believers in Jesus. There is no record as to why he put this question to them, but he asked them: Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? The question evidently carries with it the thought that they ought to have done so. And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given. And he said [most probably in surprise], Into what then were ye baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism. And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them.

These people were not Christians, they were not born again; they were the disciples of Jesus as He was heralded by John. It was therefore necessary for them to receive the Holy Spirit, in order that they might pass from that region of water baptism into the region of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But it may be wondered how there came to be disciples of John as far away as Ephesus. The explanation is found in the context: Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, a learned man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. . . . Being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John. That accounts for the presence of disciples at Ephesus. When Apollos came there, he himself did not know the baptism of the Spirit; and these were people baptized with the baptism of John, and knowing therefore only so much of Jesus as John himself had been able to declare. Apollos himself had to be instructed in the way of God more carefully? and when the apostle came, this handful of believers in John's baptism had also to be taught. Therefore to interpret this text as teaching that beyond the day of conversion there is some other gift of the Holy Spirit necessary, is to wrest it out of its proper setting and to set up a new standard of Christian life, for which it gives no warrant.

There are many moral people who admire Christ, and have perchance even been baptized with John's baptism, but they have never been born again: to them this text has a direct application. But to people born again of the Spirit of God, there can be no application of this message, because by the new birth they

have received the Holy Spirit, and into that Spirit they have been baptized.

The baptism of the Spirit, then, is that miracle of regeneration whereby a man passes into the new realm of life in which Christ is supreme in the power of His own communicated life.

In the great commission, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned most assuredly the baptism referred to is that of the Holy Spirit. The words declare the condition of salvation and the promise thereof: He that believeth [that is the human condition] and is baptized [that is the Divine miracle] shall be saved. When the negative side is stated, baptism is omitted, as being unnecessary; for he that disbelieveth cannot be baptized. If it is water baptism, he can; but if it is the baptism of the Spirit, he cannot. Thus in that commission the Lord most evidently puts the baptism of the Spirit at the very entrance of the kingdom. Men believing (one faith), and being baptized (one baptism), are saved; while he that believeth not is condemned.

By this baptism of the Spirit the individual becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit; and the message that ought to be delivered to Christian people to-day is: Ye are a temple of God,¹ do not desecrate the temple, but let the Divine One Who indwells, govern absolutely the whole being. Not that the heart should be opened to admit the Spirit; for God's children are such because the Holy Spirit has already taken possession, and even though defiled, they nevertheless are the temples of the Holy Spirit; for it was not to sanctified people, in the usually accepted sense of the term, that the apostle said: Ye are a temple of God. The central fact, the great and almost appalling miracle of Christianity, is that persons baptized by the Spirit become temples of God. They also become members of the catholic Church, parts of the Body of Christ. Moreover, by that baptism they are sealed unto a consummation, sealed unto the final day of redemption.

It is to be feared that many, in emphasizing what is spoken of as the second blessing--an idea and an expression to be found nowhere in Scripture--insult and degrade the blessing of regeneration, which holds within itself all subsequent unfoldings of blessing and of power.

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