

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (continued) - The Reception of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

I should state first of all that we will be studying the *Scriptural elements* that seem to prepare for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I am *not* looking at techniques or methods many may use to help or encourage people to receive the baptism. *My only present concern is the data of Scripture itself.*

- 1) **NEITHER WATER BAPTISM NOR THE LAYING ON OF HANDS ARE NECESSARY PRE-CONDITIONS TO RECEIVING THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.** That is, neither practice *mediates the Spirit*. The 120 believers in the upper room probably were baptized in water before they were filled with the Spirit. The text certainly makes clear that neither *the Samaritans (Acts 8:12-17)* nor *Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48)* were baptized in water when they were filled with the Spirit.

With the laying on of hands, again, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. In *three cases* where people are filled with the Spirit (**Acts 8:18, 9:17, 19:6**) the Spirit is given as hands are placed upon the recipient (and please note that Ananias was *not* an apostle). In *two cases* (**Acts 2:4, 10:44**) there is no mention of the laying on of hands.

- 2) **THOSE BAPTIZED IN THE SPIRIT WERE ALREADY BELIEVERS IN JESUS CHRIST** - Taking the text at its most basic sense, Spirit-baptism seems to *always* follow repentance and cleansing of sin. This is clearly the case with the *disciples in the Upper Room* (many of whom's names were already written the heaven - **Luke 10:20** - "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." These are Jesus' words to the 72 who returned rejoicing after their evangelistic trip.

This same principle seems to hold true throughout the book of Acts. The *Samaritans* are clearly identified as those who heard the gospel, believed in Jesus, and were baptized in His name - **Acts 8:12** - "But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." The Apostle Paul was clearly recognized by Ananias as a "brother" before he was filled with the Spirit - **Acts 9:17** - "So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Also, quite significantly, Cornelius and those in his house were filled with the Spirit *after* Peter preached Jesus Christ to them. The Spirit was *not* poured out because Cornelius was a "devout" and "God fearing" (**Acts 10:2**), but presumably after Jesus Christ as the risen Lord was specifically proclaimed - **Acts 10:34-43** - "So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, [35] but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. [36] As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), [37] you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: [38] how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. [39] And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, [40] but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, [41] not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. [42] And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. [43] To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." That Peter is sent to *proclaim Jesus* to this God fearing man is significant. *Then* they are filled with the Spirit.

At the risk of being repetitive, the same case can be made for the *Ephesian believers* in **Acts 19:4-7** - "And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." [5] On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. [6] And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. [7] There were about twelve men in all."

- 3) **THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE** - It's important to note that the *background of Pentecost was a committed obedience to the words of Jesus* - **Acts 1:1-5** - "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, [2] until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. [3] To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. [4] And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; [5] for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." The Holy Spirit was first poured out in a response of obedience to the direct command of Jesus to wait for the fulfillment of the promise of the Father. They were not told *how long* they would have to wait. They simply committed themselves to *continue following the instructions of the Ascended Jesus just as they had while He was physically with them*. We already noted the same kind of obedience in *Paul (Acts 9:6)* and *Cornelius (Acts 10:5)*. Specific steps of obedience directly lead to their infilling with the Holy Spirit.

This fits in so clearly with much of the New Testament teaching on obedience and the reception of the Holy Spirit. See especially **John 14:15-17** - "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. [16] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, [17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." This very general text lays down a principle. Just as the Holy Spirit only brings *regeneration* as we obey in steps of repentance and faith, so He comes to *baptize* believers under the same umbrella of obedience. Also, our obedient asking and seeking no more *earns* the baptism in the Holy Spirit then does our faith and repentance *earn* our regeneration.

- 4) **THE CENTRALITY OF PRAYER** - Jesus was praying when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him - **Luke 3:21-22** - "Now when all the people

were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, [22] and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit wasn't given by accident or osmosis. God *responded* to children who ask (*the whole passage is framed in the context of a child's request to a father*) - **Luke 11:13** - "If you then, 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!"

These words of Jesus were taken seriously by the church. Those waiting for the Promise of the Father in the upper room weren't just passing time. The text says they "*devoted themselves to prayer*" (**Acts 1:14**). Paul was fasting and praying *for three days prior to being filled with the Spirit* (**Acts 9:9-11**). Cornelius was prepared by "*praying constantly to God*" (**Acts 10:2**).

We have much to learn from these texts. Charismatic history is marred with the sweaty attempts of people who try to *pump up or manipulate people into some quick "experience" without the deep discipline of learning to wait expectantly on God*. There is nothing I know of in the Scripture that would lead us to put the blame of not receiving on God's sovereignty ("*Well, I'm ready. Whenever God wants to fill me He will.*"). The texts seem to place the emphasis on human hunger and expectation.

- 5) **THE ATTITUDE OF EXPECTANCY** - The prayer of those mentioned in the book of Acts was *prayer with an expected end and focus*. Those in the upper room were not just told to *wait*. They were told to *wait for something* - the *promise of the Father regarding the baptism in the Holy Spirit* - **Acts 1:4-5** - "And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; [5] for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

In his post-pentecost sermon, Peter encouraged others to share in this *same expectancy* **Acts 2:38-39** - "And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." In **Acts 8:15** Peter and John prayed that the Samaritans might "*receive the Holy Spirit*". Before he prayed, Ananias explained to Paul the *goal* of his praying - "*that you may see again, and be filled with the Holy Spirit*" (**Acts 9:17**). In each case, the goal is to awaken and increase faith and expectancy. See also Paul's question to the believers at Ephesus (**Acts 19:2**).

- 6) **THE YIELDED HEART** - I have chosen the words "*yielding*" and "*self-emptying*." These are *my* terms and may not be quite right. I have in mind a time for the *increase of hunger* for the Spirit of God. You can use your own term, but I think at least some of the texts record a *time of preparation* (sometimes long, sometimes very short). There were several days in the Upper Room, three days of prayer and fasting for Paul (to say nothing of blindness). It seems that some kind of *self-emptying* takes place prior to *Divine infilling*.

Without being too dogmatic, there also frequently seems to be a *growing yieldedness to the ministry of others*. The mighty Paul receives his infilling at the hands of Ananias, the Samaritans through Peter and John, the believers at Ephesus through Paul, etc. This is God's way of pulling us away from our society's rabid independence. There needs to be a reawakening of the *power of community in bringing about spiritual filling and refreshing*. Through the prayerful ministry of others our pride is moved out of the way. If I want to grow in the life of the Spirit I must keep in close, living contact with the Body of Christ.