

INTRODUCTION

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Shortly after becoming a Christian, some of my believing friends would ask, “Have you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?” I wasn’t quite sure how to answer. At the time, I always envisioned the Acts 2 experience where the dead were raised, the sick were healed, and Christians walked around with ethereal glowing tongues of fire hovering above their heads. So I never felt worthy to say, “I’m baptized in the Holy Spirit.” As far as I knew, I wasn’t able to raise the dead or heal the sick. So the best answer I could give was, “I have the Spirit, but I’m not sure I have ‘the baptism.’ ”

I don’t think we can afford to be confused on this matter, because the church is prophetically overdue to receive a major, history-altering baptism of the Spirit. I want to be filled with that Spirit when He comes, and I want you to be filled too. Even more important, our churches need to be baptized with the Spirit. Frankly, this generation hasn’t experienced what a church can do when it is full with God’s Spirit, the way the apostles were filled on Pentecost. It’s going to happen again, and soon, and we need to be ready for it.

So what exactly is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and how do we know if we have it? And if we don’t have it, how can we get it? I’d like to explore the baptism of the Holy Spirit in a little more depth in the hope that you’ll be inspired to seek this wonderful blessing from the Lord.

CHAPTER ONE

Degrees of the Spirit

The baptism of the Holy Spirit simply means having the fullness of the Spirit.

Before experiencing that fullness, you must already have some of that Spirit residing in

you. In other words, you have to have some vital relationship with Jesus to expect to be filled with the Spirit. It wasn't pagans or gentiles who received the baptism at Pentecost. And it wasn't the Jews who fought against Christ. Rather it was those who had been walking side by side with Jesus for three-and-a-half years. They were ready for it.

Just as you can have varying intensities of relationships with people, you can have a relationship with the Holy Spirit in varying

degrees. Did Jesus have the Holy Spirit before He began His ministry? Of course He did, but the Holy Spirit came down to Him in a special measure at His baptism. Still, "God gives not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:34). This means that Jesus had a limitless supply of the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, did the apostles have the Holy Spirit before Pentecost? Yes, because Jesus sent them out to preach. Would He have done that if they didn't have the Spirit? However, they received a special fullness of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, often called the baptism of the Holy Spirit, at the time of Pentecost. John the Baptist prophesied this in Matthew 3:11: "I indeed baptize you with water ... but there is One coming after me who is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."