
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What is the "baptism of fire"?**

In Mt 3:11 John the baptizer mentions a "*baptism of fire*":

Matthew 3:11

¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**

Some people, misunderstanding what this refers to, pray to God and ask God to give them baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire.

Actually, there are two baptisms spoken of in this verse:

- A baptism with the Holy Spirit.
- A baptism with fire.

These are not referring to the same thing. These are two separate baptisms.

Baptism With The Spirit

The baptism with the Holy Spirit occurred only twice according to the NT scriptures.

- The first time it occurred was in Acts 2:1-21 when the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised this to His apostles in Acts 1:5. This was a direct outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power upon the apostles to show that the kingdom of God had arrived. At this time, only Jewish people and proselytes were admitted into the Lord's kingdom (church).

- The second time baptism with the Spirit occurred was in Acts 10:44-45. This was identical to the baptism with the Spirit which occurred on Pentecost. The purpose of this baptism occurring here was to show that Gentiles were now accepted into the kingdom of God (church).

Notice the following passage:

Acts 11:15-16

¹⁵ [Peter said] as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.

¹⁶ Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

Notice, Peter did NOT say, "*The Holy Spirit fell on them just like He falls on everyone who is truly a Christian.*" No, Peter had to refer all the way back to "*the beginning*" (Pentecost) in order to find the only other occurrence of this baptism.

Obviously, not every saved person received this baptism. Its purpose was not to save anyone, but rather to indicate the arrival of God's kingdom to the Jews first and to the Gentiles second (see Rom 1:16).

Baptism Of Fire

Recall that Mt 3:11 mentions not only baptism with the Holy Spirit, but also baptism of fire. In context, this refers to punishment in the lake of fire at the end of world history. Let's re-read the passage, but this time, let's read it in context with the verses that come before and after.

Matthew 3:8-12

⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

John is speaking here to the Sadducees (v7) who thought they could be saved without repentance.

⁹ and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

This means: Simply being a Jew is not enough to be saved. Jews never were saved simply because they were Jews. Like Gentiles, they also must repent and obey God to receive forgiveness.

¹⁰ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

This means: Each person is like a tree. If a person is obedient to God he will be like a fruitful tree and be saved. If a person is disobedient, they are like a worthless tree which is cut down and burned in fire.

¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Notice carefully, the "*fire*" of this verse is a reference back to the "*fire*" of v10. This is not something a person wants to pray for.

¹² His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Notice again, the "*unquenchable fire*" is a reference to the "*baptism with fire*" of v11.

The word "*baptism*" means immersion. To be baptized in fire means to be immersed in fire. Hell fire is called a "*lake of fire*" (Rev 20:15). To be baptized with fire means to be immersed into the lake of fire at the end of time – something that no one truly wants.

In order to spare us from such a fate, the Lord came to save us from our sins. He died on the cross to pay the price we owed. The Lord has given a plan of salvation whereby we can be washed clean from our sins and spare us from being immersed into that lake of fire. That plan of salvation has four steps:

- One must believe Jesus is God's Son (Jn 8:24).
- One must repent of all sins (Lk 13:3).
- One must confess the name of Christ verbally (Rom 10:10).
- One must be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Either way, everyone living today will be baptized. We may voluntarily be baptized in water and be saved (1 Pet 3:21) or we may wait and be baptized against our will in a lake of fire (Rev 20:15). The choice is ours, but we will all be baptized one way or the other.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for considering our message this week. I invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on *Bible Talk*.