

# What Was Baptism In The Holy Spirit?

## Bible Answers About Miracles

To the Pharisees and Sadducees that came to be baptized, John said, "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt 3:11 NAS cf. Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16). What was the baptism of the Holy Spirit? One should ask the following important questions to help in the understanding of this very important issue. Who was the administrator of the Holy Spirit baptism? To whom was the baptism of the Holy Spirit promised? Who were baptized with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament? Why were they baptized with the Holy Spirit? May we expect the baptism of the Holy Spirit today?

The first thing one should observe is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was never given as a command to be administered by man, nor was it to be obeyed by man. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a promise to be received by certain men chosen for a certain purpose. When Jesus spoke on the subject between His resurrection and His ascension, He appeared to the chosen apostles, speaking to them things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:1-3). Among the things spoken to them were the following words: "... wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," {He said,} "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:4-5 NAS). Overjoyed at this statement they asked, "... Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6 NAS). To this question Jesus replied with the following promise, "... It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8 NAS). It is clear that while John could and did baptize in water it was Christ, and only Christ, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Another fundamental thing to be noticed here is that John did not mean to include all disciples, with reference to being baptized in the Holy Spirit; neither did he mean that all of the multitude, which heard him, would receive the baptism of fire. He simply made a prophetic declaration, regarding these matters, to the multitudes that heard him.

The logical question to ask now is who was baptized with the Holy Spirit? There can be no doubt regarding those who were promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The promise was made to the apostles. The very nature of the baptism of the Holy Spirit will bear evidence of this fact. Having been told they would receive the promise of the Father and would be clothed with power from on high, the apostles tarried in Jerusalem, as instructed, until it should be received (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4). The apostles were the chosen ambassadors of Christ, to be guided by the Holy Spirit, revealing all truth (2 Cor. 5:18-20; John 16:13). In order for them to reveal all truth, and nothing but the truth, there was the necessity of complete possession of their speech and their writings, being completely endued by the Holy Spirit, or baptized with the Holy Spirit (John 15:16). The twelve, including Matthias, did wait, and on the Pentecost following the Lord's resurrection, "... And they were all filled

with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance" (Acts 2:4 NAS). There follows an account of the preaching on that day and included in the preaching are both things Jesus had said to them and things He had not said to them. Peter later refers to this occasion as "the beginning" (Acts 11:15). The baptism in the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to recall infallibly what Jesus taught and to relate infallibly what Jesus wanted men to know but which He had not taught prior to His ascension. Further, to convince men that they spoke the truth from God, the baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to perform miracles as evidence they were God-sent (Heb. 2:3-4). Therefore, Paul could argue that he really was an apostle for he was not one whit behind the chiefest, in that he performed the signs of an apostle (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11-12).

We turn our attention to the case found in Acts 10 regarding the conversion of Cornelius and his household. First, it is important to note carefully that in Acts 11, and according to verse 4, Peter explained all the circumstances surrounding the conversion of Cornelius according to the order of occurrence! "But Peter began {speaking} and {proceeded} to explain to them in orderly sequence ... " (Acts 11:4 NAS). Then in verse 15 Peter said, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as {He did} upon us at the beginning." If the Spirit fell upon Cornelius as Peter began speaking, then it is clear that when the Spirit came Peter had not been speaking. And, if Peter had not been speaking, and if saving faith comes by the hearing of the Word (Rom. 10:17), then when the Spirit came Cornelius was without saving faith (in the Christ). And, if Cornelius was a Christian when the Spirit came, then he was a Christian without faith in Christ and without complying with the terms of the gospel of Christ.

The fact of the matter is that Cornelius was to come to have the salvation in the Christ as a consequence of the words which Peter would speak to him (Acts 11:14). At the time the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius these words had not been spoken. Later, Peter commanded Cornelius and his household "to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:48 NAS). This baptism, in the name of Christ, was for remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and that he might be added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). It is crystal clear that the baptism of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius, in Acts 10, had nothing to do with salvation from alien sins!

What, then, was the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism? In Acts 2 the purpose was to make it clear to Jewish people that it was God's plan for them to hear, to believe, and to obey the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. However, in Acts 10 the purpose was to make it clear to Jews and to Gentiles that it was God's plan for the Gentiles to hear, to believe, and to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ just as the Jews. Therefore, God has one plan for Jew and Gentile alike. The very point which convinced the Jews that Gentiles could be saved was Peter's reference to the fact that God gave to the Gentiles the miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:16-18). If this was the use which Peter made of the matter, it must have been the purpose for which God gave it!

It must be obvious, therefore, that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not essential to one's salvation. In our day there is no such thing as a baptism of the Holy Spirit; and since there are only two distinct cases in the entire New Testament of Holy Spirit baptism, Holy Spirit baptism had nothing to do with salvation and the remission of sins.

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