

Two Separate Experiences

It is often common for newcomers to the Christian faith to wait years before receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit! One of the primary reasons for this is because they confuse it with their salvation experience.

However, the Bible is abundantly clear that after the New Birth, there is another Gift to follow, as equally beautiful and supernatural as the first.

After His Resurrection, and just before the Ascension, Jesus gave instructions to His followers not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the Promise of the Father. Luke records:

This, he said, is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

(Acts 1:4-6)

In the very next chapter, we see the fulfilment of the Lord's words on the Day of Pentecost:

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

(Acts 2:1-5)

That this is not a reference to the New Birth, but subsequent to it, is very obvious. The prerequisite for salvation is repentance and faith in Jesus as Lord. And the Scriptures clearly state that those who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost had already met these requirements. Consider the following:

Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you."

(John 13:10-11)

The Lord here clearly declares these men *clean*, with the exception of Judas, who although a member of the Apostolic Team, was never converted. Later during that same evening Jesus repeated this theme:

You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.

(John 15:3-4)

And what does it mean to be *cleansed by the Word*? The Apostle Peter gives us the answer:

You have been born anew, not of perishable, but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

(1Peter 1:23-24)

Therefore, it is clear Jesus was referring to something completely different. We find more irrefutable proof elsewhere in the Book of Acts. The Evangelist Philip had gone down to Samaria and preached Christ to them. After this, we read:

But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women.

(Acts 8:12-13)

Here again we learn that these Samaritans were saved, for it says they *believed* and were *baptized*. But that they had not received of the Holy Spirit ALL that was possible for them to receive is evident by what follows. Luke goes on to say:

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.

The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

(Acts 8:14-17)

There is one other clear example in the Book of Acts where the born-again experience and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit are presented as two separate experiences. We are told further on:

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples.

He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism."

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, in Jesus." In hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied, altogether there were about twelve of them.

(Acts 19:1-8)

That these twelve men were already *born anew* before Paul's arrival is again made obvious from the use of the words, *believers* and *disciples*.

It is also highly probable that teaching on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was what Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside to explain. Many commentators are even convinced it was Apollos who had actually converted this group of Christians at Ephesus, because of their similar experiences.

Another Obstacle Removed

Finally, perhaps another contributing factor to new converts missing out on this blessing is the wrong belief that praying for someone to receive the Holy Spirit is a ministry gift that not all believers possess.

Supporters of this view usually quote the passage from Acts chapter eight mentioned above as proof. First, the writer does not explain why Philip did not pray for the Samaritans to receive. There could be a variety of reasons, but Philip not having power to do so is not one of them!

This is made evident elsewhere in the Book of Acts itself. In chapter nine a simple Disciple named Ananias was the instrument through which God used to help the Apostle Paul in the matter!