

Place: Lurgan Baptist 31:10:12

Reading: Acts 2:1-13

## THE CHURCH ABLAZE

### 3. WHAT IS THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ?

On one occasion Dr. R. Torrey was sharing a conference platform with a Dr. White. As they were talking together Torrey said to Whyte, “ *what we all need is a new baptism of the Holy Spirit.*” Dr. Whyte, whispered, “ *you mean filling do you not ?*” Later Torrey called at Whyte's private home and acknowledged it was best to speak of things of the Holy Spirit by their proper names. Let me begin this .... by stressing the importance of **vocabulary**. A great deal of confusion, I believe, is caused by failure on the part of many believers to use the terminology of the Bible. Its important to remember that every sport, every profession, every art has its own vocabulary and failure to recognise this will result in chaos and confusion.

For example in the **Medical World**, the surgeon has a name for every different kind of instrument that he uses and its no use the nurse saying, “ *I'll call this instrument what I like.*” If she does the result will be chaos. In the **Musical World**, the conductor of the orchestra has a name for each of the instruments in the

orchestra, and there is no use someone coming along and saying, “ It makes no difference to me what he calls the instruments, I have my own name for each of them. He may call it a flute, but I'm going to call it a clarinet.” In the **Family World**, parents have names for each of their children and there is no good a stranger coming along and saying, “ *I don't care what you call your children, I have names of my own for them.*”

Names and terms are important if we are going to avoid confusion and a disregard of this elementary fact by many Christians has produced complete confusion in the thinking of many in relation to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. **But what is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit ?** In ( 2:12 ) a very important question is asked, “ *What meanest this ?*” If we had been in Jerusalem on this particular day we would have asked the same question. Jerusalem was packed with people. Passover occurred in late March or early April, so Pentecost was at the beginning of June. It was the best attended of the great feasts because travelling conditions were at their best. There was never a more cosmopolitan gathering in Jerusalem than this one. It was the perfect time for the descent of the Holy Spirit of God. My .... there is nothing haphazard about God. Pentecost was the fulfilment of Divine prophecy.

Now a proper interpretation of ( Acts 2 ) depends on understanding what Pentecost is all about. The Greek word for “ *Pentecost,*” means “ *fiftieth day.*” The Jews had a feast called the Feast of Pentecost because it took place fifty days after the Feast of First-fruits which followed the Passover. There are three feasts mentioned in ( Lev 23 ) that I want to mention briefly.

### (1) THE FEAST OF PASSOVER:

( Lev 23:4-5 ) Do you recall that to escape the plague on the firstborn the Israelites had to kill a lamb and apply its blood to the doorposts and lintel ? Paul calls Christ our Passover. ( 1 Cor 5:7 ) So not only was the Passover Lamb in ( Ex Ch 12 ) a picture of Christ, but it was also an indication that Christ would die on Passover .... the fourteenth of Nissan, which corresponds to a day in late March or early April.

### (2) THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS:

( Lev 23:9-14 ) This feast was on the day after the Sabbath following the Passover .... the Sunday after Passover. The Feast of First-fruits is a picture of the resurrection of Christ. Paul says, “ *Now is Christ from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*”

( 1 Cor 15:20 ) Just as the feast of first-fruits showed that the rest of the harvest would be good, so Christ's resurrection shows we will also be resurrected. Christ said, “ *Because I live ye shall live also.*” ( Jn 14:19 )

### (3) THE FEAST OF HARVEST:

( Lev 23:15-16 ) Fifty days after the Feast of First-fruits came the Feast of Harvest ( Ex 23:16 ) so called because it ushered in the harvesting period. This Feast is also known as Pentecost. The idea of the feast was to celebrate the completion of the harvest in advance. Now this feast predicts what happened on the day of

Pentecost in ( Acts 2 ) It speaks of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Son, the Lord Jesus honoured the Passover by dying. The Father honoured the Feast of First-Fruits by raising Christ from the dead. The Holy Spirit honoured the Feast of Weeks by coming on the disciples of Christ as they waited in that Jerusalem room.

The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost to fulfil prophecy. My .... the Holy Spirit could not have come on any other day than the day that was appointed.

***Pentecost was a predetermined epoch in the mind of God.*** Now this does away with the notion held in some circles today that you have to wait to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that you must go through stages to Pentecost. That you have to tarry, wait, and ask for the Baptism of the Spirit. Now its true that the disciples did tarry in obedience to Christ's command, ( Lk 24:49 1:4-5 ) but they were told the precise spot, “ *Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem ....,*” So if anyone tells us that they are tarrying for the Baptism of the Spirit we have every right to ask “ *is it at Jerusalem ?*” More importantly, we have every right to ask, “ ***is it necessary ?***” That all depends .... depends on what ? Depends on whether or not the tarrying of the disciples caused the Descent or Baptism of the Spirit. The answer is no. The Holy Spirit did not come on the Day of Pentecost, because the disciples tarried, prayed, or met certain spiritual requirements. The Holy Spirit came on this day because that's when God planned for Him to come. He came on this day to fulfil prophecy. The appointed day had arrived and the Holy Spirit came. Now ( Acts Ch 2 ) is all about the Baptism of the

Holy Spirit and considerable difference of opinion surrounds this subject. For Charismatic's and many Pentecostalist's this is really the linchpin doctrine.

By *linchpin*, I mean, it holds all the other Charismatics teachings together. They teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a distinct work of the Holy Spirit beyond, and separate from, and in addition to salvation. They also believe that certain physical manifestations show that a person has experienced this baptism. Initially, the proof was speaking in tongues. Now a variety of other physical manifestations, such as shouting, physical jerks, electric currents in the limbs, and sometimes falling into trances are considered proof of the baptism.

One current Charismatic statement of faith that is typical of most Pentecostal and Charismatic statements says,

*“ All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian church. With it comes the endowment of prayer, of power for life and service, the obtainment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry. This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth.”*

So the teaching here is that a person can be saved and go to heaven without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but if you have it, you can move to a higher level of

Christian living and service. So Charismatics have now divided Christianity into two. These could be referred to as the “*haves*,” and the “*have not*s.” The “*haves*,” are those who have experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and are going to heaven first class, the “*have not*’,” are those who have not experienced this baptism and are going to heaven alright but its economy class. As always we need to ask “**What does the Bible say ?**” Always go to the authority of Scripture, not to our experience or to anyone else's, to determine the truth of the matter. So our subject this .... is “*What is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit ?*”

#### **(1) THE PROMISE MADE OF THIS BAPTISM**

There are a number of passages that look forward to this baptism. They speak of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as yet to be and not as yet experienced or bestowed. Now (1) was a promise that was made:

##### **(a) At the COMMENCEMENT of Christ's Ministry:**

In the first instance, it was made by John the Baptist in his ministry, and he made it to differentiate between his ministry and the coming ministry of the Lord Jesus. Look at: ( Matt 3:11 ) ( Mk 1:18 ) ( Lk 3:16 ) ( Jn 1:33 )

Now you see quite clearly from these passages that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was yet to be. **The Promise made of this Baptism** was made at (a) We also see that it was made:

##### **(b) At the CONCLUSION of Christ's Ministry:**

Look at the statement made by Christ which promises the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. ( 1:5 ) Notice several things about this promise.

(1) This Baptism was to be experienced by *all* and not *some*.

(2) This Baptism was yet to be, “ *ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*” future tense.

(3) This Baptism was limited to a point of time, “ *not many days hence.*” Now you will have observed that the testimony concerning the Baptism of the Holy Spirit extends from *the appearance of John the Baptist to the Ascension of Christ*. In the first four passages it is the Baptist who speaks, and in the last passage our Lord Himself speaks, but their testimonies are one. In all five passages, the announcement is prophetic, so that there was no Baptism of the Holy Spirit previous to our Lords Ascension. That I think is clear enough.

(1)

## **(2) THE PROBLEM RAISED BY THIS BAPTISM**

And the problem is this. If the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a subsequent second blessing, then why did the apostles receive the Spirit years after they were saved. You see there are two main views in relation to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**(1) The Baptism of the Spirit is an operation of the Spirit distinct from and additional to His regenerating work which is to be sought and obtained by the believer. This view maintains that**

**the terms, baptised, filled, received, gift, are all used to describe the one and the same experience. Most charismatics and many Pentecostalist’s accept this view, that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit happens at some point after salvation, and they also believe that the Baptism of the Spirit is something that Christians must seek. The notion that one gets salvation at one point and the Baptism of the Spirit later is often referred to the Doctrine of Subsequence.**

**(2) The Baptism of the Spirit is an event occurring at the same time with the reception of Christ, which is never repeated and need not be sought.** So the first view says that the Baptism is *AFTER* conversion and the second view says that the Baptism is *AT* conversion.

But herein lies our problem. If the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a subsequent blessing, then why did the apostles receive the Spirit years after they were saved ? Now this is an absolutely crucial problem and one that we have to look at in the light of what the Scriptures teach. Let's examine:

### ***(a) The Experience of the Disciples AT Pentecost:***

Charismatics attempt to support their doctrine of subsequence ( that is you get salvation at one point, and the Baptism of the Spirit later ) from the Book of Acts especially ( ch 2 ) Look at ( 2:1-4 ) Now Pentecostalists point out that the apostles and the other disciples who experienced the Baptism of the Spirit

and tongues in ( 2:1-4 ) had already been saved. Here at Pentecost, they were receiving the power of the Spirit, which they would use to change the world. Now on some of these points the charismatic view cannot be faulted. We can be certain that the disciples mentioned in ( Ch 2 ) at least some of them, had experienced salvation. These were the 120, including the apostles who were gathered in the Upper Room.

How do we know that they were already saved ? Because Christ told His apostles, “ *Rejoice because your names are written in heaven.* ” ( Lk 10:20) The Lord Jesus had said to them in the Upper Room, “ *He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet.* ” ( Jn 13:20 ) There is no doubt that the Saviour was affirming their salvation. But although the disciples knew and trusted Christ, they were still Old Testament believers. They could not have understood or experienced the Spirit's permanent indwelling until the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. You see there is:

### **(1) A TRANSITION WE NEED TO MARK HERE:**

The Acts is a transitional period. My ... when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost a new order was established, a new age was being inaugurated, and its inauguration was accompanied by extraordinary signs. During that transition period the dead were being raised to life. Are they still being raised ? During that period prison doors were opened and the servants of God were set free. Is that still happening ? During that period the sick on whom fell even the shadow of Peter were healed.

Whose shadow has that same power to day ? This was a new era. ( Acts Ch 2 ) is one of the greatest transitions recorded in Scripture. It marks the end of the old age and the beginning of the new. Up to now, the Spirit of God was with God's people, but from now on He would indwell them. ( Jn 14:17 ) On the Day of Pentecost the church was born. Sure, there were **believers** before Pentecost, but there was no **body** before Pentecost. But on the Day of Pentecost these believer units were constituted a spiritual body by the Baptism of the Spirit, and thereafter by this Baptism, everyone upon believing is incorporated into this body.

My ... ( Acts 2 ) presents a unique situation. The age of the Holy Spirit could not begin until Christ ascended. Look at ( Jn 7:37-39 ) You see the apostles did not receive the Baptism of the Spirit until after their salvation for the simple reason that ***there was no Baptism of the Spirit until the Day of Pentecost and they were saved before Pentecost.*** That's why the Baptism of the Spirit came as a subsequent blessing ***to them. There had to be a beginning somewhere.*** But since that time the Baptism of the Holy Spirit has been the blessing of all who call on the name of the Lord **at the time God saves them.** (1)

### **(2) A DISTINCTION WE NEED TO MAKE HERE:**

Its important to distinguish between the experience of those who were already disciples of Christ **before Pentecost**, and that of those who were saved **on that day**. The distinction is between the 120, and the 3,000 !

Now if I were to ask you which experience is to be the norm for today. How would you respond ? Well, we live after Pentecost, like the 3,000. With us, therefore as with them, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit are received together. ( 2:38) Now that is (a)

***(b) The Experience of the Disciples AFTER Pentecost:***

( Acts 8:14-17 ) Now this is another proof text that is used by the charismatics. They see this as evidence that one gets salvation at one point and the Baptism of the Spirit later. Certainly, there can be no question that we have here baptised believers. The question is this, “ ***why was the Holy Spirit withheld when they believed ?***” Look at ( 8:16 ) Another translation puts it like this, “ *He had not yet fallen upon any of them.*” Now the Greek word for “ *not yet,*” signifies “ *something that should have happened but has not yet.*” In other words this verse is saying the Samaritans were saved, but for some peculiar reason, what should have happened the Holy Spirits coming had not yet occurred.

Why ? Well, I think we get the clue in ( 8:14 ) Note the word “ ***Samaria.***” Philip's evangelistic efforts were with the despised Samaritans. The hatred between Jews and Samaritans was well known. ( Jn 4:9 ) Now if these Samaritans had received the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation, the terrible rift between the Jews and the Samaritans might have continued in the Christian Church. Pentecost had been a Jewish event,

and the church born at Pentecost was made up exclusively of Jewish believers in Christ. Now if the Samaritans had started their own Christian group, the age long rivalry would have continued, with a Jewish church competing against Samaritan assemblies.

***Do you see now why God withheld the Holy Spirit ?*** He withheld the gift of the Spirit to the Samaritans until the Jewish apostles could be with them, so that everyone could see that God's purpose under the New Covenant transcended the nation of Israel and included even Samaritans in ***ONE*** church. My .... let us ever remember the transition that was going on in the early church. ( Acts 2 ) presents a unique situation. It cannot be used to say that a believer is baptised with the Spirit some time after salvation. The Holy Spirit came to baptise and indwell the disciples in ( Acts 2 ) because that's when God planned for the Spirit to come. There had to be a beginning somewhere. (1) (2)

**(3) THE PURPOSE SERVED THROUGH THIS BAPTISM**

What purpose does the Baptism of the Holy Spirit serve ? Well, when we turn to the NT we discover that this Baptism is:

***(a) Something which is CONSTITUTIONAL:***

Look at ( 1 Cor 12:13 ) That word, “ *by,*” can be translated “ *in or with,*” but whatever way we take it Paul is stressing that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a Baptism into the Body of Christ. What happened on

the Day of Pentecost was this. These believer units were constituted a Spiritual Body by the Baptism of the Spirit, and thereafter by this Baptism everyone upon believing in Christ is incorporated into the Body. Did you notice here that this Baptism is not connected with our *State* as believers but with our *Standing* as believers ? My .... the real purpose of the baptism in the Spirit is not that Christians may be energised for witness and service, nor that we may achieve ecstatic utterance or experience, the real purpose of the Baptism of the Spirit is to bring us into the Body of Christ !

Literally, that word “ *baptise,* ” means “ *to immerse.* ” But figuratively it means “ *to be identified with.* ” When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, He identified these believers with their glorified Head the Lord Jesus and formed the body which is the church. “ *For by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body.* ” So the Baptism of the Spirit is when God's Spirit takes a person and places him in the Body of Christ ! Look at how it happened in ( Acts 2:2-3 ) These were the signs of the Spirits arrival. Wind and Fire symbols of the Holy Spirit. ( Jn 3:8 Is 4:4 ) There was,

### (1) THE AWESOME SOUND:

It was a sound *like* a wind. It was not wind but a sound like wind, something resembling a rushing hurricane. “ *And suddenly .....* ” ( 2:2 ) The church was born suddenly. It came into being instantaneously. At the Rapture the church will leave just as quickly. ( Rev 22:12 ) God has the sovereign right to determine

when the church begins and ends and its beginning and ending have nothing to do with anyone's prayers. (1)

### (2) THE AWESOME SIGHT:

( 2:3 ) The cloven tongues that sat on their heads weren't actually fire, they appeared to be like fire. This was a testimony that each without exception had received the Holy Spirit. This was the Baptism of the Spirit and they all partook of it. The Holy Spirit identifying these believers with their glorified Head the Lord Jesus, and forming the body which is the church. (a)

### *(b) Something which is INITIAL:*

There is a sense in which the Baptism in the Spirit is *Historical* and there is a sense in which it is *Personal*. But it is always associated with the idea of initiation into Christ and into the Body of Christ. Without doubt there is in ( 1 Cor 12:13 )

### (1) Something HISTORICAL:

When Paul says, “ *For by one Spirit .....* ” ( 1 Cor 12:13 ) He is referring back to Pentecost as the occasion when all believers were baptised into the Body of Christ. F. F. Bruce says, “ *The Baptism of the Spirit, was strictly speaking something that took place once for all on the day of Pentecost.* ”

### (2) Something PERSONAL:

For these words must also be taken to refer to the

blessing personally received by all Christians at their conversion. As S. S. Short says, “ *The apostles Baptism in the Spirit occurred on the Day of Pentecost when the Body of Christ was initially formed. The Spirit Baptism of people since that occasion has occurred at their conversion, but in each case it has been when they were divinely incorporated into Christ's body .... their Baptism in the Spirit being the means of that incorporation.*” My .... from God's viewpoint we were baptised in the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, from our viewpoint we were baptised the moment we believed.

*(c) Something which is UNIVERSAL:*

Look at ( 1 Cor 12:13 ) When Paul says, “ *For by one Spirit were we all ....*,” he is speaking of some who were quarrelsome and divisive ( 1:10 ) carnal and walked as men ( 3:3 ) guilty of gross immorality ( 5:1 ) turning the Lord's Supper into an orgy of eating and drinking ( 11:21 ) yet of these Paul says, “ *For by one Spirit were we all ....*,” they were a carnal crowd yet they had experienced the Baptism of the Spirit. My .... if this Baptism brings you into higher plane of Christian living, then what happened at Corinth ? If you can answer the question, “ *when was I placed in the Body of Christ ?*” then you can answer the question, “ *when was I baptised with the Holy Spirit ?*” The moment you believed.

What then about this current view that multitudes of Christians have never experienced the Baptism of the Spirit and that believers should seek it, tarry for it, ask

for it until they experience it. Such teaching is unscriptural and the spread of it is bringing many into bondage and confusion. The believer in the NT is never told that he **must be** baptised with the Spirit, he is told that he **has been** baptised in the Spirit. We never read in the NT that **just some** have been baptised and others have not, rather all believers have been baptised by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ and brought into union with Him. We are all one in Christ. My .... we don't have to go about seeking to create a unity. Its already there. What we should be concerned with is the outworking of that unity. We have all been baptised by the Spirit into one body. We're united to Christ and to each other. We are members of one body the church. **Let us therefore appear as one for the eyes of the world are upon us.**