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Reference

THE101 Christian Worldview

Menzies, W. William, (1984). The baptism in the holy ghost. *Bible doctrines*. . Logion Press

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BIBLE DOCTRINES

A Pentecostal Perspective

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LOGION
P R E S S

Springfield, Missouri

02-0318

Originally published as *Understanding Our Doctrine* by William W. Menzies. Revised and expanded by Stanley M. Horton

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Logion Press books are published by Gospel Publishing House.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Menzies, William W.

Bible doctrines : a Pentecostal perspective
/ William W. Menzies : Stanley M. Horton, general editor.
p. cm.

Rev. and expanded ed. of: *Understanding our doctrine*.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-88243-318-0 : \$19.95

1. Assemblies of God—Doctrines. 2. Pentecostal churches—Doctrines. 3. Bible—Criticism, interpretation, etc. I. Menzies, William W. *Understanding our doctrine*. II. Horton, Stanley M. III. Title.

BX8765.5.Z5M46 1993

230'.994—dc20

92-43219

Printed in the United States of America

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THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY GHOST

All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in 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 enduement of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 1 Cor. 12:1–31). This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 8:12–17; 10:44–46; 11:14–16; 15:7–9). With the baptism in the Holy Ghost come such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37–39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence for God (Acts 2:43; Heb. 12:28), an intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word and for the lost (Mark 16:20).

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WHAT THE FATHER HAD PROMISED

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is rich and varied. Though deeply personal and internal, one aspect of the work of the Spirit is, nonetheless, primarily concerned with the expression of the Christian life, and in this sense is external in purpose. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not primarily for the development of holiness in the individual (although this may be and should be enhanced by the baptism in the Spirit); it is empowering for service. Jesus told the men and women gathered in the Upper Room, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). On another occasion "while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with [in] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with [in] the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 1:4–5). Then just before He ascended, He said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'" (Acts 1:8).

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Notice that this promise was given to disciples already in close communion with Christ. Their names were already written in heaven (Luke 10:20). "They were clean before God, having had a spiritual bath through Christ's Word (John 13:10; 15:3)."¹ From the time of Christ's resurrection, they were also a new covenant body, the Church, the old covenant having been abolished at Calvary (Eph. 2:15). According to Hebrews 9:15–17, the death of Christ put the new covenant into effect. The emphasis of Acts 1:8 is power for service, not regeneration, not sanctification. So we conclude that one may be regenerated, may be a saint, and yet not enjoy the baptism in the Spirit and its anointing for service, which Jesus promised believers.

Some have treated the baptism in the Holy Spirit as primarily a matter of sanctification. Some have even made the chief object of the Christian life the perfecting of oneself. We must avoid this idea. We actually achieve more growth while in service for our Lord. The saint, that is, the person who is dedicated and consecrated to the worship and service of the Lord, is not the one who spends all his or her time in study, prayer, and devotion, important as that is. The saint is the one who not only separates from evil but is separated and anointed for the Master's service. This was symbolized in the Old Testament by the fact the blood was first applied in the act of cleansing and the oil was then applied over the blood (Lev. 14:14,17). That is, cleansing was followed by a symbolic anointing that represented the Spirit's work in preparing for service. So we too are anointed, as were the prophets, kings, and priests of old (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20).

The means and power for service come through the gifts of the Spirit. But the gifts of the Spirit need to be distinguished from the gift of the Spirit. The baptism in the Spirit was necessary before the first disciples were to leave Jerusalem or even begin to fulfill the Great Commission. They needed power, and the

¹See Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 132.

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very name Holy Spirit is connected with power.³ He came as the Gift and as the Power. He himself is the firstfruits of the final harvest, come to begin a work that will bring some from every kindred, tongue, people, and nation together around the throne (Rev. 5:9). The same baptism in the Spirit was experienced by others on at least four other occasions in Acts . . . as well as by still others later on, according to Titus 3:5.

³E. W. Bullinger, *The Giver and His Gifts* (London: The Lamp Press, 1953), 26, 27.²

BIBLICAL TERMINOLOGY FOR THE BAPTISM

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is also called by other terms. We must remember that the Holy Spirit is a person. "Baptism" describes only one aspect of the experience of His Person. It is also called a filling: "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4). As Joel prophesied (2:28–29), the Spirit was "poured out" upon them (Acts 2:33; 10:45). They "received" (actively took) the gift (Acts 2:38; 8:17). The Spirit "came on" them (Acts 10:44; 11:15; 19:16). Some modern writers suppose that baptism in the Spirit refers to something different from filling, or that the Pentecostal experience was limited to the Day of Pentecost. But with the use of all these terms in the Bible, it is clear that what happened on the Day of Pentecost was repeated.

Peter saw, too, that the "last days" bring opportunity for times of refreshing. Acts 3:19 could be translated, "Repent therefore and turn to [God for] the blotting out of your sins so that times of refreshing (or revival) may come from the presence of the Lord and He may send Jesus Christ who was appointed for you (or, appointed as your Messiah)."

The way Peter looked at Joel's prophecy shows he expected a continuing fulfillment of the prophecy to the end of the "last days." This means also that Joel's outpouring is available to the end of this age. As long as God keeps calling people to salvation, He wants to pour out the Spirit upon them: "The promise [that is, the Old Testament prophecy in Joel] is for you and your

²*Ibid.*, 258–259. (See also p. 250.)

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children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39).³

From this we see that the Spirit's baptizing work does continue,⁴ and we today have available to us the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, which Jesus also called the promise of the Father.

THE PURPOSE OF THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

In addition to the power for service through which the individual becomes a potential channel of great witness to the world, the baptism in the Spirit becomes the entrance into a mode of worship that blesses the assembled saints of God. The baptism is the gateway into the manifold ministries in the Spirit called gifts of the Spirit, including many spiritual ministries.⁵

Those who were converted, baptized in water, and baptized in the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost showed further evidence of the work of the Spirit in their lives as "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching [now found in the New Testament] and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . . Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts [at the morning and

³Ibid., 146–147.

⁴This is seen also in Acts 19:1–7. The twelve men undoubtedly professed to be followers of Jesus, but Paul sensed something missing, so he asked them (literally), "Having believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit?" "Having believed" (Gk. *pisteusantes*) is an aorist participle, a form that normally indicates action prior to the main verb, in this case, prior to the receiving. Similar grammatical constructions occur in passages such as these (translated literally): "Having married a wife, he died" (Matt. 22:25); "Having carried her [Sapphira] out, they buried her" (Acts 5:10); "Having shaken the dust off their feet, they came to Iconium" (Acts 13:51); "Having received this order, he threw them into the inner prison" (Acts 16:24). It is clear also that Paul baptized the believers in water before he placed his hands on them and the Holy Spirit came on them. See Horton, *What the Bible Says*, 159–162; and Donald C. Stamps, ed., *The Full Life Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1990), 269.

⁵Since these gifts are intended for the corporate body of the local church and its edification, we will discuss them in more detail in chap. 10, dealing with the Church.

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evening hours of prayer]. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42, 46–47). Herein is described a continuing work of the Spirit that deepened their experience and their love for God, for His Word, for one another, and for the lost.

In fact, it should always be kept in mind that the baptism in the Spirit is not a climactic experience. As Pentecost itself was only the beginning of the harvest and brought men [and women] into a fellowship of worship, teaching, and service, so the baptism in the Holy Spirit is only a door into a growing relationship with the Spirit and with other believers. It leads to a life of service where the gifts of the Spirit provide power and wisdom for the spread of the gospel and the growth of the Church. This is evidenced by the rapid spread of the gospel in many areas of the world today. New fillings, new directions of service are to be expected as new needs arise, and as God in His sovereign will carries out His plan.⁶

Some have pointed out that Paul's epistles do not say much about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. There is good reason for this: The baptism in the Holy Spirit was the normal experience of all first-century believers. All the people to whom he was writing were already filled with the Holy Spirit. So that was not a question. However, some things he does say are important; for example, "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Cor. 1:21–22; see also 5:5). Ephesians 1:13 makes this even more emphatic: "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." Ephesians 4:30 adds, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

The word "deposit" (2 Cor. 1:22) really means a first

⁶Horton, *What the Bible Says*, 261.

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installment. The firstfruits are an actual part of the harvest (see Rom. 8:23). In the same way the Holy Spirit as a "deposit" is

an actual part of the inheritance, and is the guarantee of what we shall receive in larger measure later.¹³ Our inheritance is more than a hope. Now, in the midst of the corruption, decay, and death of the present age, we enjoy in and through the Holy Spirit the actual beginning of our inheritance.¹⁴ . . .

Some have taken "seal" to mean protection, safety, or security. But the seal is a present acknowledgment that we are the Lord's. Of itself, it does not mean we cannot lose our salvation. Nor does the Greek imply here the kind of sealing that is done when food is sealed in a jar or tin can to protect it from contamination. [We indeed "through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5)], but this is not automatic. The faith must be maintained. . . .

The seal in the New Testament also has the idea of a designation of ownership, a trademark indicating we are His workmanship (Eph. 2:10).¹⁵ . . . The seal is also a mark of recognition that we are indeed sons, and an evidence that God has indeed accepted our faith.

¹³René Pache, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1966), 25.

¹⁴George Eldon Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968), 101–102.

¹⁵William Barclay, *The Promise of the Spirit* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 15.⁷

Ephesians 1:13 indicates further that the sealing is after the believing. This does not mean God's ownership is dependent on the sealing. We are made His through the blood of Jesus and through our response of faith to God's grace. Therefore, the seal is a recognition of ownership; it does not produce the ownership. Then, since the seal was always something visible or tangible that others could recognize, the baptism in the Holy Spirit with its outward

⁷Ibid., 237–238.

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evidence of speaking in other tongues fits the New Testament idea of sealing.⁸

Another important passage is 1 Corinthians 12:13: "We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and were all given the one Spirit to drink." The preposition "by" (Gk. *en*) clearly means "by" in all the other verses where it is linked with the Holy Spirit in this chapter. John the Baptist declared that Jesus is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Paul makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is the One who baptizes us into Christ, that is, into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). The two baptisms are clearly distinct. The Holy Spirit first baptizes us into the body of Christ, then Jesus baptizes us into the Holy Spirit.⁹

Paul further emphasizes the importance of living in the Spirit. This means we will be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit by such things as rage, anger, brawling, slander, or any kind of malice. Instead we will be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave us (Eph. 4:30–32). We will not have anything to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness (Eph. 5:11), nor will we be drunk with wine, but instead will be filled (the Gk. means "keep on being filled") with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

The Spirit is the source of the love, zeal, and state of heart that enables us to serve the Lord acceptably, with "spiritual fervor" (Rom. 12:11), a fervor that is boiling, burning, aglow with the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ In fact, we must be careful not to put out the Spirit's fire by rejecting or

⁸"Most commentators forget also that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was the normal experience of all believers in New Testament times. Therefore, in Paul's mind he is not drawing a line between sealed believers and those who do not have that privilege. He sees all believers as having had the experience and as therefore included" (Ibid., 239).

⁹Anthony D. Palma, "Baptism by the Spirit," *Advance* (June 1980), 16. See also Horton, *What the Bible Says*, 214–216.

¹⁰Horton, *What the Bible Says*, 194.

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demeaning the Spirit's supernatural manifestations (1 Thess. 5:19–20).¹¹

RECEIVING THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

One final question deserves special attention: "How may one receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit?" The experience is described as a gift (Acts 10:45), and is therefore not in any way deserved or earned. It is received by faith—active, obedient faith. God has promised to pour out His Holy Spirit on hungry seekers who open their hearts to Him and ask. "If you then, though you are evil [in contrast to God who is totally righteous and completely holy and good], know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13). We note too that the 120 who received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost worshiped Jesus and spent much time praising God (Luke 24:52–53). Joyful praise and expectation prepare our hearts to receive. We note also that when they were filled with the Spirit they all "began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). That is, they did not hold back, but in obedient faith used their tongues, lips, and voices to speak out what the Spirit gave them.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the evidence that the disciples were already saved and were members of the Church before they were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost?
2. What is the primary purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit?
3. Some today say that after the Day of Pentecost people were filled with the Holy Spirit but not baptized. What is the evidence that the term "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is

¹¹See *Full Life Study Bible*, 442. The fire of zeal is connected with the Holy Spirit. This is in contrast to the fire of judgment. For a discussion of the meaning of "the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire," where John the Baptist may have been offering a choice between the baptism in the Spirit and a baptism in the fire of judgment, see Horton, *What the Bible Says*, 84–89.

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not limited to the experience of those who were baptized on the Day of Pentecost?

4. What effects followed in Acts 2 after the 120 were baptized in the Holy Spirit?

5. What is the meaning of the word "seal" in relation to the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

6. What is the meaning of the word "deposit" ("earnest," KJV) in relation to the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

7. What are the evidences that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a distinct experience that should follow that of conversion?