



Adult Education

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Baptism by Fire and Spirit

- Acts 2:38-47



WAESHAEL

Rev A

The missionary church

Acts 2:38-47 "Then Peter said unto them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

*And with **many other words** did he testify and exhort, saying, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Then those who **gladly received his words** were baptized,*

*and that same day there were added unto them about **three thousand souls**.*

*And they continued steadfastly in **the apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in prayers.*

And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common, and they sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all men, as every man had need. And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Notes

Beginning at 9 am and ending at 6 p.m. i.e. 9 hours, three thousand *souls* were added, and most readers assume that it was a water baptism of some sort. But there was no nearby water except for the pools of Bethesda, and of Siloa . Outside Jerusalem it was desert, and except for the underground aqueduct providing drinking and washing water to the city, there was no running water. The pools within the city were never mentioned as being used for water baptisms, though they were used for the purification and healing of the Jews.

On average 311 souls must have been "baptized" every hour - ten souls every two minutes. It is hard to visualize how the Apostles could take confession, explain the faith and water baptize 3000 people in nine hours - one every two minutes. Obviously this "baptism" must have been different from those later complex procedures of the 1st c. Church.

So, perhaps this was a baptism that did not require the person to be submerged in water. Perhaps the "baptism" was not of water at all but of "fire" and of the Spirit, as John the Baptist foretold. Here on the day of Pentecost perhaps the Apostles had been "baptized" *en masse* with the Holy Spirit, and with "fire".

Notes

Jo 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. .

Perhaps the 3000 *souls* were baptized spiritually by God. Perhaps “baptism” meant the change of heart following the reception of the grace of repentance. Perhaps *repent* and *be baptized* were synonymous - the gift of God - the grace of repentance enabling the believer to receive God’s gift of the Holy Spirit immediately.

In these verses, God gave the grace of repentance to he who *gladly received his words* - who also asked God in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins.

Peter promised the *gift of the Holy Spirit*, but he explained that this gift was from God directly for it was also to be offered to those who were unable to hear Peter’s message, even to those not yet born, and to those far from the holy city. It was to be given by God to any He chose.

And here it seems that *Repent and be baptized every one of you . . .* is not a demand for the people to turn away from the world to God, but is rather a blessing given to the listeners by Peter by virtue of the power that God had given to him and the Apostles to “loosen and bind” so that those Peter blessed would receive grace from God. In this situation that blessing would enable the listeners to repent and be made suitable for the reception of the Holy Spirit - no effort on their part was needed.

Notes

Remember, God’s promise to Abraham was that He would bless the descendants of Abraham whom Abraham himself blessed - no strings attached.

Peter has received this same promise. Whom ever Peter blesses, will be blessed by God. *Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven* (i.e. Peter will be doing God’s will).

Those chosen by God (made blessed of God) have no choice as to whether or not they will accept God’s Will. God will “fire them up” with the Holy Spirit, and they will respond immediately, as did the Apostles at Pentecost, who spoke in tongues (foreign languages) quite apart from their own will. Or He will make them “meek”, or “poor in spirit”, or “mournful” or “pure in heart” as Jesus stated in His sermon on the mount.

God chooses who He will bless, and who He will not - just as Jesus said.

Now the response of the people, after receiving the spirit baptism was as follows:

*They **joined together in one accord in the Temple (Church) and met daily.** They **Fellowshipped** with the Apostles; they **broke bread** with the other believers in their houses and to joined them in **praising God**. They gave away to the brethren and any in need, all of their possessions. They **feared God’s judgment**, and the Apostles showed them many wonders and signs.*

Notes

Mt 16:19* And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt **bind on earth** shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Mt 18:18* Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall **bind on earth** shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

*“And the Lord added to the church daily **such as should be saved.**”*

So, you see that this spirit baptism had an immediate and dramatic affect on the believers. They changed lifestyle to that of a seminarian. They gave up their normal work, sold everything, and studied full time. In the language of the first century, they truly *repented*.

In this verse, it is God who adds people to the Church, not the Apostles, and He does it to ensure the salvation of those He chooses. The Church was established to teach those who will be saved, how to serve God.

Jesus brought with Him the power of God to transform peoples lives without any effort on their part, other than belief in His Son.

Our new understanding is that it was the Word of God that baptized the listeners - it was God's grace that touched their spirits and caused the listeners to repent. The spirit of God baptizes through the words. Not the words themselves have this power, but only the spirit of the words - that is the spiritual truth that is in the words, which the Holy Spirit makes clear to the listener who *received His word*. Baptism is not man's physical response after hearing God's word. Rather, **baptism is what the spirit of man experiences when he is touched by God.**

Notes

To bind: to be in bonds, knit
To loosen: to destroy, dissolve

In Peter's church, only those who *received his words* were blessed with the Holy Spirit, and this was an action of God alone.

In conclusion:

The purpose of the Apostolic church (that is the Church as it was in the 1st. c.) was to provide an environment for the salvific education of those people chosen by God to receive the Holy Spirit.

This included: teaching the congregation apostolic doctrine, teaching them to practice that doctrine, sharing meals together - Apostles and laity praising God together, visiting each other's homes, breaking bread together, and sharing all possessions amongst the brethren.

Notes

The Views expressed here are strictly those of the author and probably disagree with what you have previously thought. Read other commentaries - meditate on the original KJV.
