

THE GOSPEL COMMUNITY IN PRAISE, PSALMS AND PRAYERS
TO A SOVEREIGN GOD!
ACTS CH4:23-31

ILLUSTRATION

The Church in Jerusalem was initially:

- 120 people - Ch1:15
- then 3120 people - Ch2:41
- then 3120+ people - Ch2:47
- to 5000 men probably anything from 5000-10,000 people - Ch4:4

Peter has preached on three occasions up to this point:

1. Ch1:15-26
2. Ch2:14-36
3. Ch3:12-26
4. Ch4:8-12

PERSECUTION! V23-28

The Church's response to the apostles' release was a spontaneous outburst of ***praise, psalms (singing) and prayers!*** They begin by addressing God as "***DESPOTA***" - ***Sovereign Lord!*** It is especially appropriate here in conjunction with what was happening in Psalm 2, in Jesus' crucifixion, and in the persecution of both Peter and John. But also in relation to the amount of times the word "***servant***" is used in these verses:

- v25 - our father David, ***your servant*** (The disciples see themselves as the real Israel as they refer to David as "father"!)
- v27- your ***Holy servant Jesus***
- v29 - grant to ***your servants***
- v30 - your ***Holy servant Jesus***

Psalm 2 is mentioned here and in Acts Ch13:33 as the second psalm, and ***concerns God's anointed One and the vision of God's universal Kingdom.*** Psalm 2:1-2 lists a group of people, which are equated to the following in verse Ch4:27 -

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| • v2 Kings of the earth | - | v27 King Herod |
| • v2 The Rulers | - | v27 Pontius Pilate |
| • v1 The Nations | - | v27 Gentile authorities (Romans) |
| • v1 The People | - | v27 The people of Israel |

We call this a "***PESHER.***" *An Old Testament prophecy, which can be fulfilled by God stepping in on any given day in history and a set day in the future! When they crucified Jesus, this was that "set day" in the future – pesher!*

The disciples saw through Psalm 2 concerning David and what had happened to Jesus and those involved in His crucifixion, to now happening to Peter and John, and understood that the all powerful and creative God v24-25, was the same God that had ordained this persecution, just like He did the death and crucifixion of His Son, Jesus!

PRAYER! V29-30

Understanding that God is Sovereign over all things – **DESPOTA**, the disciples make two prayer requests. This understanding is based on what has already been said and fully understood about God's sovereignty over nature and human affairs v23-v28!

- 1. Take note of their threats and act accordingly O God! The same people v25 “peoples plot in vain” and “the peoples of Israel” v27, have gathered together, the Sanhedrin, to threaten the apostles Ch4:18+21.**
- 2. Whilst Psalm 2 makes it clear that the judgement of God must inevitably fall upon those who reject God's Son, now, while there is still an opportunity to preach the Good News about Jesus Christ, the disciples prayer is that God would continue to grant them the boldness of which is needed to proclaim the Gospel! The disciples believe fully in the name of Jesus and His power!**

When it comes to healing, signs and wonders recorded in v30 then, and we think about now, where do you stand? How does the Bible influence your thoughts and beliefs? To what extent do you allow the Bible to shape your understanding?

According to John Stott “If then we take Scripture as our guide, we will avoid opposite extremes. We will neither describe miracles as never happening nor as everyday occurrences, neither as impossible nor as normal. Instead, we will be entirely open to the God who works both through nature and through miracle” (John Stott, The Message of Acts, pg104).

POWER! V31

Evidence of God's approval and His willingness to answer the disciples specific prayers, is evident as the place where they were meeting “shakes” and the disciples are again “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ch2:4; 4:8; 4:31; 9:17; + 13:9). It is through Him, that they are able to speak the Word of God in boldness! **Boldness translates “as the freedom of speech by those empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God.” It highlights the rights of citizens of the heavenly Kingdom to say anything in public, with an openness to speak the truth BOLDLY.**

The continuing filling (Ch2:1-4) of God the Holy Spirit is further evidence, along with Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension, of the inauguration (beginning of) of the Last Days! The continuous filling of God the Holy Spirit is like a “continuous heavy tropical rainstorm from the day of Pentecost to when Jesus returns – Acts Ch2:1-4; 9:10, 12; 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5; 12:9; 16:9, 10; 18:9)!”

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

According to Wayne Grudem, “Pentecostalism emerged in the early 20th Century among radical adherents of the holiness movement who were energized by revivalism and expectation for the imminent second coming of Christ. Believing that they were living in the end times they expected God to spiritually renew the Christian Church, thereby bringing to pass the restoration of spiritual gifts and the evangelization of the world. In 1900, **Charles Parham**, an American evangelist and faith healer, began teaching that speaking in tongues was the Bible evidence of Spirit baptism.

The three year long **Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, California**, resulted in the spread of Pentecostalism, throughout the United States and the rest of the World, as visitors carried the Pentecostal experience. With the spread of Pentecostalism that began in 1901 and the widespread influence of the charismatic movement in the 1960's – 1970's, the remarkable growth of the Pentecostal and charismatic churches from 1970 to the

present, the question of a “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” distinct from regeneration, has come into increasing prominence.

Many Christians say that they have experienced a “baptism in the Holy Spirit” that came after they became Christians and that brought great blessing in their lives. They claim that prayer and Bible Study have become much more meaningful and effective, that they discovered new joy in worship, and they often say that they have received new spiritual gifts (especially the gift of speaking in tongues).

The traditional Pentecostal or charismatic position is supported by Scripture in the following way:

- 1. JESUS' disciples were born again believers long before the day of Pentecost, perhaps during JESUS' life and ministry, but certainly by the time that JESUS, after His resurrection, “and with that he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit” (John Ch20:22).*
- 2. JESUS nevertheless commanded His disciples “..... do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised ...” (Acts Ch1:4), telling them, “in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit” (Acts Ch1:5). He told them, “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts Ch1:8). The disciples then obeyed JESUS' commands and waited in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come upon them so that they would **receive new empowering for witness and ministry.***
- 3. When the disciples had waited for 10 days, the day of Pentecost came, tongues of fire rested above their head, “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts Ch2:4). This clearly shows that they received a baptism **in (or with) the Holy Spirit.** Although the disciples were born again long before Pentecost, at Pentecost they received a “baptism with the Holy Spirit” (Acts Ch1:5, Ch11:16 refer to it this way) that was subsequent to conversion and resulted in great empowering for ministry as well as speaking in tongues.*
- 4. Christian's today, like the apostles, should ask JESUS for a “baptism in the Holy Spirit” and thus follow the pattern of the disciples lives. **If we receive this baptism of the Holy Spirit it will result in much more power for ministry for our own lives,** just as it did in the lives of the disciples, and will often (always, according to some teachers) result in speaking in tongues as well.*
- 5. Support for this pattern – in which people are first born again and then later are baptised in the Holy Spirit – is seen in several other instances in the Book of Acts. It is seen, for example, in Acts 8, where the people of Samaria first became Christians but when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of JESUS CHRIST” (Acts Ch8:12), but only later received the Holy Spirit when the apostles Peter and John came from Jerusalem and prayed for them (Acts Ch8:14-17). Another example is found in Acts Ch19, where Paul came and found “some disciples” at Ephesus (Acts Ch19:1). But, “when Paul placed his his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied”(Acts Ch19:6). All of these examples (Acts 2, 8, 10, 19) are cited by Pentecostals in order to show that a “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” subsequent to conversion was a very common occurrence for New Testament*

Christians.

Therefore, they reason, if it was common for Christians in Acts to have this second experience sometime after conversion, should it not be common for us today?

We can understand this issue of the baptism in the Holy Spirit by asking three questions;

1. What does the phrase “baptism in the Holy Spirit” mean in the New Testament?

There are only 7 passages in the New Testament where we read of someone being “baptised” in the Holy Spirit.

Matthew Ch3:11

Mark Ch1:8

Luke Ch3:16

John Ch1:33

It is hard to draw any conclusions from these four passages with respect to what baptism in the Holy Spirit really is. **We discover that JESUS** is the one who will carry out the baptism and He will baptise His followers.

Acts Ch1:5

Acts Ch11:16

These two passages show us that whatever we may understand baptism in the Holy Spirit to be, it certainly happened at the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts with great power where they spoke in tongues and about three thousand people were converted (Acts Ch2:14+41).

It is important to realise that in all six cases the same exact word in the Greek is used! The only remaining reference in the New Testament is:

1st Corinthians Ch12:13 “For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body ...”

Now the question is whether this verse refers to the same activity as the other six verses.

In the Greek **en heni pneumati ebaptisthemen** – in one Spirit we were baptised. The only difference is that Paul uses one Spirit rather than the Holy Spirit. It is hard to deny that the original readers would have seen this phrase as referring to the same thing as the other six verses because for them the same words were used.

What shall we say about the phrase “baptism in the Holy Spirit”? It is a phrase that the New Testament authors use to speak of coming into the new covenant power of the Holy Spirit. It happened at Pentecost for the disciples, but it happened at conversion for the Corinthians and us. It is not a phrase the New Testament authors would use to speak of any post-conversion experience of empowering by the Holy Spirit.

2. How should we understand the “second experiences” that came to born again believers in the Book of Acts?

But even if we have correctly understood the experience of the disciples at Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, are there not other examples of people who had a second experience of empowering of the Holy Spirit after conversion, such as those in Acts 8 (Samaria), Acts 10 (Cornelius' household), and Acts 19 (the Ephesian Disciples)?

These are not really convincing examples to prove the Pentecostal doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit. First the expression "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is not used to refer to these events, and this should give us some hesitation in applying this phrase to them and secondly a closer look at each case shows more clearly what was happening.

- 3. Are there other Biblical expressions such as "filling with the Holy Spirit" that are better suited to describe an empowering with the Holy Spirit that comes after conversion?*

Yes! Empowering for ministry! Paul tells the Ephesian Church "Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit" (Eph Ch5:18).

He uses a present tense imperative verb that could be more explicitly translated "Be continually filled by the Holy Spirit". Therefore it is important to understand that filling is not a one-time event, but as an event that can occur over and over again."
(Cited in Systematic Theology, by Wayne Grudem)

APPLICATION

Let's ask God to be filled for ministry by God The Holy Spirit, and access that crucial power that exists in the powerful name of Jesus!

Remember the 6 mince pies! 2 strong Christians, 2 wobbly Christians, 2 non- Christians!
Remember the tyre illustration!