

Manna

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The Power of God

Just before His ascension, the Lord told His disciples that they were to tarry in Jerusalem until they be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). This was repeated again in Acts 1:8. All Bible scholars have recognized the fulfilment of these verses in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

We do have a few questions to raise on these matters though. They are as follows:

1. Similarly, is the born again experience always simultaneous with the baptism in the Holy Spirit?
2. Is the baptism in the Holy Spirit always simultaneous with the enduement of power?
3. What is the power of God and is it essential to being a witness?

Question 1

In regard to the first question as to whether the born again experience is simultaneous with the baptism in the Spirit, we know from the book of Acts that it is not always simultaneous.

Cornelius and his relatives received the born again experience simultaneously with the baptism in the Spirit (Acts 10:44-48). The Samaritans were first born again under Philip's ministry but later received the baptism in the Spirit under Peter's ministry (Acts 8:11, 12; 15-17). The Ephesians came

Two other possible explanation of this time gap (instead of concluding it as not simultaneous) is to redefine the power to mean any type of power (eg. Love, zeal, or as C.G. Finney defined it as the power of conviction) or to say that the power was received simultaneously but took time to developed. The only problems these explanations would produce is how biblical are these explanations in the light of Jesus' and Paul's definition of power in the gospels and in the epistles respectively. It is interesting to note that even though Finney redefined the power as that of conviction of the Holy Spirit, he advocates a continual seeking and tarrying for this power and in no way recognizes it as a one time experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (pg 10 'Power from on high' by C.G. Finney, Victory Press).

Question 3

There is no doubt that when the apostle Paul mentions the power of God that he speaks about the signs and wonders and miraculous works of God (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Thess 1:5; 1 Cor 1:17, 18; 2:4, 5; 4:20). Jesus did not limit the ability to do His mighty works to fivefold ministers but He specifically promises that anyone who believes in Him can do the works that He did and greater works (John 14:12).

Evangelicals try to explain the lack of miracles by writing it off as a one time

to some knowledge of repentance through John's baptism and were baptized in water by Paul; who then prayed that they be baptised in the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-6).

It is apparent from the book of Acts that even when the born again experience can possibly be simultaneous with the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the disciples do not take it for granted but always prayed that the new converts be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

From the days of the Azusa street Pentecostal revival until now, this question has been of great contention between the Pentecostals and the evangelicals (Evangelicals normally interpreting the two experiences as one).

Question 2

Pentecostals have always presumed that the answer to question two is a resounding "Yes." Although I acknowledge that there are increased manifestations of the power of God among the Pentecostals, I question the fact as to why up to now, with one third to half of Christians in the world either Pentecostals or at the least Charismatic (Pentecostals and Charismatics are supposedly baptized in the Holy Spirit), there is still none of the fullness of the demonstration of the power of God to win the world for Jesus. If indeed being baptized in the Holy Spirit is synonymous with power, where is this power?

Firstly, we note that in the life of Jesus, there was a time difference when the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the waters of baptism and when the Holy Spirit was upon Him in power after the temptation (Luke 3:22; 4:1,14). In the apostles' lives there was also a time gap between the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and them moving in the power of God (Acts 2:4,43;3:6;5:12). In Paul's life there, he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid hands on him but only demonstrated power when he

historical demonstration when Jesus came to earth. Pentecostals tend to explain away the lack of miracles today by diluting the definition of a miracle. Nicodemus told, "No one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him." (John 3:1). Perhaps, God is not 100% with us His church because of our sin and lack of love for Him.

Firstly, I need to lay to rest the fact that I understand that one is to seek the giver and not the gift. And that love is the most important attribute in all of Christianity (1 Cor 13: 13). But when we are faced with an ungodly world that cannot be won by our philosophy, charity or words alone and which is so hungry for the supernatural that it is turning to demonic and occultic sources, we need to cry out for a supernatural Christianity.

Jesus told the Pharisees that if they found it hard to believe in Him, then believe Him for the sake of the works themselves (John 10:38). He even implied that if He did not demonstrate the works, they need not believe in Him (John 10:37). Paul advocates the preaching of the gospel not by the wisdom of man alone but by the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:5; Rom 15:19). Signs and wonders follow those who believe (Mark 16:17, 18). Jesus said that the Spirit is upon Him to heal the broken hearted, to set the captives free, to open blind eyes and preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18). When was the last time you saw the blind heal? The lame walk? The paralysed raised?

Unless we see our need and our lack, we will never turn to God and depend on Him for the lack or need. Unless we as a church acknowledge how far we have come away from the fullness of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ we will never even bother to pray to seek God for our lack and failure.

Many of us came to Jesus without seeing the full demonstration of the power of the

moved into his apostolic ministry (Acts 9:17;13:9; Rom 15:19).

Moreover, the demonstrations of the power of the Holy Spirit seem to be shown only in a select number of disciples and not upon every disciple, eg Stephen and Philip even though all seven deacons were filled or baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3, 8; 8:5-8). There were wonderful disciples like Dorcas who must have been filled with the Holy Spirit and have great impact upon the church through their love and talents but did not demonstrate great power in healing miracles (Acts 9:36). A careful reading, without preconceived ideas or prejudices, of the examples of the disciples in the book of Acts and in the epistles seem to lead one to the conclusion that this enduement of power is not simultaneous with the baptism in the Holy Spirit although it can be.

gospel. For the generation before us and the generation before them have never seen the power of God. We stand about two thousand years from the impact of the coming of Jesus and the Holy Spirit and have seen the watering down of the full gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to repent and seek His face for the full restoration of the glory of the church and especially for the latter glory that He has reserved for our generation.

(To be continued next issue – keys to power).

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