

PNEUMATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

PART 10

PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTICS; BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT, PART 2

Saul was filled with the Spirit when he was anointed to be Israel's first king, but when he failed to faithfully execute his assigned duties, the Spirit left him.

1 Samuel 10:6 ⁶“Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man.

1 Samuel 11:6 ⁶Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry.

1 Samuel 16:14 ¹⁴Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.

David was filled with the Spirit when he was anointed king. He was possibly (probably) filled with the Spirit for the remainder of his life. When his sin with Bathsheba was uncovered, he pleaded with the Lord not to remove the Spirit from Him.

1 Samuel 16:13 ¹³Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward....

Psalms 51:11 ¹¹Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Other examples of the Spirit coming upon Old Testament saints:

1 Chronicles 12:18 ¹⁸Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, who was the chief of the thirty, and he said, “We are yours, O David, And with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, And peace to him who helps you; Indeed, your God helps you!” Then David received them and made them captains of the band.

2 Chronicles 15:1 ¹Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded,

2 Chronicles 24:20 ²⁰Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said to them, “Thus God has said, ‘Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you.’ ”

Ezekiel 2:2²As He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me.

Moses stated that he wished all of the Lord's people would have the Spirit so that all would prophesy and that statement is an implication that not every Old Testament believer was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Numbers 11:29²⁹But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"

In context, the presentation of the great truth of Spirit baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is that a unified body of Christ works together in harmony one with another exercising spiritual gifts for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Spirit baptism isn't just some holy sounding event that happens to people; it has a purpose. At least a partial understanding of this purpose is acknowledging that being placed into and identifying with Christ should result in unity, harmony, and glorifying God. This ministry is specifically allocated to the Church. It is a ministry of identity with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. In the sense of position, we are all in Him, united not only with Him but one with the other forever. This Scripture applies to all believers; there is no differentiation in this baptism from one person who comes to faith and another. All believers are placed into the body of Christ and united with all other believers and this happens in a moment in time. It is a grace gift of God and no one has to seek out the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit is without consideration of race or gender; all who believe are equally adopted into the family of God.

Galatians 3:28²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Every person may be gifted at the moment of the Spirit's baptism in order to contribute to the proper order and function within the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. ⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.... ¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

[Note: I will speak about the various spiritual gifts later.] Paul went on to use the analogy of a body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 in order to present the importance of everyone properly functioning in the body. If a part of the body is missing and not functional, then

the body is weakened and it cannot do what it is supposed to be doing. For example, if I am the opposable thumb on the right hand of the body and the four fingers have abandoned their posts, then I am limited in my ability to function as the opposable thumb. In the same way, when people remove their Spirit assigned tasks from the body, the body suffers and it cannot be as effective as it otherwise would be. What does this say to those who claim they can be perfectly good Christians without being a functional member of a local body of Christ? Certainly, they can be saved and baptized by the Spirit but can they really be in the will of God when they remove themselves from a local body? Of course not; the will of God is that all be in a local body using the abilities the Holy Spirit has graciously bestowed upon them to the building up of the body of Christ and to His glory. It isn't about us as individual believers; it is about Christ and serving Him as a local body. We cannot effectively do that in isolation.

Ephesians 4:11–16 ¹¹And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

The baptism of the Spirit places people into the true church which is composed of only those who are born again believers in Christ Jesus. They are a subgroup of what I call "churchianity" or the visible church. All the various denominations and all the people who call themselves Christians that make up this visible church are not all part of the true Church. This is the point of the parable of the wheat and tares that Jesus preached in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 as He prepared His disciples for the upcoming church age.

Christ presented the truth of this unity to the eleven in His Upper Room Discourse and by application through the baptism of the Spirit it applies to all believers. We have put on Christ through the baptism of the Spirit; in other words, we are completely united with Him and unified with all other believers.

John 14:20 ²⁰"In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

Galatians 3:27 ²⁷For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

The most extreme misunderstanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is found in Pentecostal/Charismatic/Word of Faith theology. They teach a second baptism, sometimes referred to as a second blessing which is evidenced by speaking in tongues. Some of them teach three baptisms of the Spirit. That's what happens when people start adding to the Bible—there is no end to it. If there are two or three baptisms, why are there not four baptisms? That may well come to pass one day; if doctrine is invented out of nothing in order to support a theological construct, there is no end to it. Pentecostals have a number of reasons for reaching this conclusion and none of them seem to be exegetically valid. My intent here is to be fair to the position they take and explain why it is not in accordance with Scripture. Pentecostal/Charismatic/Word of Faith theology predominates on Christian television and radio and it is infecting many churches without people really realizing the truth of what they have embraced so we need to be aware of this theology so we don't get inadvertently sucked into it. It is also not my intention to deeply examine this theology; I think it is unbiblical and I only want to acquaint you with it so you can recognize it when you are exposed to it.

While I am addressing Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Word of Faith theologies together, I recognize there are differences, some significant, between these groups. However, their understanding of Spirit baptism is generally consistent across this spectrum. From what I have observed, conservative denominations such as the Assembly of God are on one end of this spectrum while the excesses of the Word of Faith movement are on the other end. Conservative Pentecostals acknowledge this diversity. I was somewhat willing to give the more conservative parts of Pentecostal theology a pass on some things until my research for this class uncovered what I believe to be serious errors concerning inspiration and hermeneutics across all areas of the Pentecostal spectrum. I am not saying they are unbelievers but I am saying I have discovered some hermeneutical issues that are very troubling.

“Pentecostalism was born with the conviction that the pentecostals were on the cutting edge of the near fulfillment of the kingdom of God. Nearly a century has passed since that conviction was born, and pentecostals have had to rethink their eschatology. The eschatological passion began to wane as pentecostals, especially (though not exclusively) white pentecostals in the U.S., began to move into the middle class. The conviction that ‘this world is not my home’ was largely discarded in favor of a health-and-wealth message that promoted a self-centered concern for prosperity” [*The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. and exp., ed. Stanley M. Burgess and assoc. ed. Eduard M. Van der Maas, p. 1138].

The first error is one that most critics of Pentecostal theology miss and that is the Pentecostal view of the book of Acts which makes all the events of the first century church normative, binding doctrine for the church in perpetuity. Acts is a historical narrative recounting the establishment of the church and as such it serves as a bridge from the dispensation of the Law through the life of Christ and on into the dispensation of grace. Some of the events of the early church were necessary, foundational elements of its beginning but are no longer crucial to the Lord's plan for building His church. For example, signs, miracles, and wonders served the crucial purpose of authenticating the message and the messenger prior to the completion of the New Testament canon; once the canon was complete those miracles were superseded and replaced by the Word of God.

“The pentecostals do not regard the apostles as constituting a spiritual ‘aristocracy’ whose experience of the Spirit was allegedly different in kind, and not only in degree, from that which may be had in the churches of succeeding generations. The experience of the Spirit depicted in the Bible, especially in the book of Acts, is for all Christians of all generations, because the same Spirit involved in the events and words of the text is alive in the church today, and the Jesus whom the Spirit anointed and to whom the Spirit bears witness is ‘the same, yesterday, today, and forever.’ There is for pentecostals a certain ‘present-tenseness’ to the events and words of the Bible, so what happened then, happens now, and what was promised then inspires assurance and hope in every Christian today. Reading the text becomes an event of the Spirit, in which the reader is transformed and made to experience what the Bible puts forth as living truth. Thus, the pentecostals inherited a kind of ‘biblicism,’ in the sense that they believed themselves capable of entering and living in the world of the Bible through the ministry of the Spirit without the need for consciously engaging the hermeneutical difficulties of reading an ancient text from a modern situation....The truth and authority of the Bible for pentecostals have always been spiritually discerned, especially in the community of faith empowered by the gifts of the Spirit and ‘anointed’ preaching” [Burgess and Van der Maas, p. 1121-1122].

As quoted above, the main reason Pentecostals will give for making the events of Acts normative for all ages is that God never changes; therefore, what He did then He must continue to do now. It is true that God never changes, His attributes are eternal and they do not change, but the way He interacts with His creation has changed throughout the ages. That distinction is lost in Pentecostal theology. That is again a failure to understand dispensational distinctions. It is true the apostles were not and are not a spiritual aristocracy but they were men selected by the Lord to inaugurate the church and they were given prerogatives that were not passed on to men coming after them.

Given the lack of understanding concerning dispensational distinctions among these Pentecostal type groups and the abuse of not only the Old Testament Scriptures but also the New Testament in which they so often engage, it is somewhat surprising to learn that early in Pentecostal history most of them claimed to be dispensational theologians.

Contemporary Pentecostals have rethought their claim to dispensational theology and have come to recognize that their hermeneutic and their presuppositions are not compatible with the dispensational theological construct. I have or will be pointing out a number of exegetical departures from literal hermeneutics that are evidence of this departure from dispensational thought. They actually admit that nonliteral hermeneutics is normative for the development of their theology; personal experience and emotion is of primary importance. Understanding this will give you great insight into how and why they believe what you see and hear in modern Christian media.

“Pentecostals have always favored testimonies, choruses, and prayers over intellectual or critical reflection as the means by which to interpret the gospel....pentecostals, coming primarily from black, non-Western roots have accented oral tradition, visions, dreams, and the dance as the primary means by which to interpret the gospel theologically. This non-Western root of the movement joined with the catholic spirituality channeled through Wesley to give pentecostalism its ecumenical significance....it focuses on the actual experiences of pentecostal communities and the dramatic and oral means of expressing and understanding them....the so-called nonacademic theology of pentecostals has not necessarily precluded disciplined exegetical work and theological reflection with the various theological *loci*. Such disciplined exegesis and systematic theological reflection are significant, since nonacademic theology is not generally consciously critical, contextual, or methodical in its approach. Many pentecostals agree that the more rational exegetical and theological approaches to the gospel should still have a place in the development of various pentecostal theologies....rational approaches to theology...do not negate the significance of the nonacademic theologizing among pentecostals...nonacademic narrative and dramatic theologizing can offer a significant voice in the current theological climate....The most creative pentecostal theological discourse can be included as a more-or-less popular form of a nonacademic theological genre” [Burgess and Van der Maas, p. 1120-1121].

This is an astounding admission. In this Pentecostal, spiritual, experiential hermeneutic, the Bible can be made to say whatever someone wants it to say when the guiding interpretive principle is individual experience. It is telling that in this dictionary I'm using here, there is an entry for Word of Wisdom but there is no entry for the Word of God or for the Bible. The presuppositions employed here do not begin with the Word of God;

they begin with the theologian, the pastor, and even the individual Christian. I also checked a Charismatic systematic theology text entitled *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, 3 vols., by J. Rodman Williams and the Bible does not warrant a chapter in three volumes of a systematic theology text that is 1,450 pages in length. I have a systematic theology of the Assemblies of God that does contain a chapter on the Bible and on inspiration that seems to be orthodox. However, in the chapter on the Holy Spirit, they claim the “full-gospel message says that God continues to speak and act today, just as He did in the Old and New Testament times” [“The Holy Spirit” by Mark D. McLean in *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., ed. Stanley M. Horton, p. 375]. In other words, revelation is ongoing and this allows experientially based Pentecostal presuppositions and experiences to enter into the hermeneutical process. In the same way, they have specifically disavowed dispensational theology and its reliance on literal hermeneutics. This is why I keep referencing their failure to take dispensational distinctions into their interpretation of numerous Scriptures. They do not, they cannot in their theological system, understand the different ways God has interacted with people across the spectrum of the ages.

“The first challenge involved in revisioning [sic] pentecostal eschatological passion relates to the dependence of many early pentecostals on dispensationalism. The pentecostal flirtation with dispensationalism was to be expected, since it was the overwhelmingly dominant eschatological vision of the fundamentalist world to which pentecostalism was so intimately connected. But pentecostals did not fully understand what dispensationalism implied hermeneutically....early pentecostals adopted the dispensationalist philosophy of history but without the ecclesiological and hermeneutical assumptions that undergirded it. In time, many of the pentecostals adopted these as well, without understanding the ‘uneasy relationship’ they were creating with typically pentecostal distinctive....pentecostals...read the Bible in a way that allows the text to speak directly to them and to their experiences of God. This approach to Scripture does not fit well with a dispensationalist fragmentation of Scripture into different covenants and historical dispensations, so that the OT and much of the Gospels relate directly only to Israel and to the fulfillment of God’s covenant with this nation in the millennium. Furthermore, pentecostals viewed the age of the church, especially the book of Acts and the 20th century, as the era of the Spirit foretold in the OT (e.g., Joel 2:28-29) and by John the Baptist (e.g. Matt. 3), and not, as the dispensationalists held, as a hiatus between promise and fulfillment with regard to the nation Israel. While still granting Israel a relationship with God that is not dependent entirely on the church, pentecostals are obligated to continue to rethink their dependence on a dispensationalist eschatology” [Burgess and Van der Maas, p. 1138].