

## **Why Pentecost Matters – Because Spirit Baptism Is Real, Distinct, and Empowering**

**Dr. John Carmichael**

**[Act 2:1-4 NASB95] 1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.**

- One of the great needs of the modern church is doctrinal clarity about the Holy Spirit. Many believers believe in the Holy Spirit in a general sense, but remain vague about Spirit Baptism. When conviction becomes vague, hunger becomes weak. When hunger becomes weak, expectation disappears. And when expectation disappears, churches often become continuationist in doctrine but cessationist in practice.
- That is why this message matters so much for North Church. If Spirit Baptism is unclear, people will rarely seek it, seldom teach it, and almost never make room for it in corporate worship. But if Spirit Baptism is biblical, real, distinct, and empowering, then it should be preached clearly, sought earnestly, and welcomed joyfully.
- In Pentecostal theology, we do not believe Spirit Baptism is identical with regeneration. We believe the disciples were regenerated in John 20:22, when Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Pentecost, then, was not the new birth of the church, but the empowerment of the church. Acts presents Spirit Baptism as a real experience of divine empowerment beyond conversion, and the initial physical evidence of that baptism is speaking in tongues.

**If Jesus promised a baptism in the Holy Spirit distinct from conversion and gave it to empower believers, why would the church today settle for being saved without earnestly seeking that empowering experience?**

**To understand why Pentecost still matters, we must answer four foundational questions: What is Spirit Baptism? Is it the same as regeneration? When does it occur? And why do Pentecostals say that tongues are the initial physical evidence? These six points answer those four foundational questions.**

### **I. Jesus Is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit**

- a. [Luk 3:16 NASB95] 16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
- b. [Act 1:4-5 NASB95] 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," [He said,] "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."
- c. Spirit Baptism begins with Jesus. John the Baptist made a clear distinction between his ministry and Christ's ministry. John baptized in water, but Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit. That means Spirit Baptism is not a Pentecostal invention, a denominational emphasis, or a side doctrine. It is part of the ministry of Jesus Himself.
- d. In Acts 1, after the resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to wait for "what the Father had promised." He did not tell them merely to remember the promise. He told them to wait for the experience. This shows that Spirit Baptism is not just a theological concept. It is a promised reality from the Father, administered by the Son.

## **Why Pentecost Matters – Because Spirit Baptism Is Real, Distinct, and Empowering**

**Dr. John Carmichael**

- e. Application: If Jesus is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, then we should not be embarrassed to preach it, seek it, or receive it. What Jesus gives should never be treated as optional by the church.
- f. Spirit Baptism is Christ-centered, not fringe. Jesus does not only save; He also baptizes in the Holy Spirit. The church should desire what Jesus promised to give.

### **II. Regeneration and Spirit Baptism Are Not Identical**

- a. [Jhn 20:22 NASB95] 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.
- b. [Act 1:4-8 NASB95] 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," [He said,] "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."
- c. This point is vital. In your theological framework, the disciples were born again in John 20:22, when Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Yet in Acts 1, these same disciples were still told to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- d. That means the new birth and Spirit Baptism are not the same event.
- e. They were already believers. They already belonged to Jesus. They had already received the Spirit in regenerating grace. Yet they still needed the empowering baptism promised by the Father.
- f. This is the doctrine of subsequence in Pentecostal theology: Spirit Baptism is distinct from, and subsequent to, conversion. That does not mean it is always separated by a long time. It means it is not identical in nature or purpose to regeneration.
- g. Application: A person can be truly saved and still need the empowering baptism in the Holy Spirit. This should produce neither pride nor confusion, but hunger. Salvation is glorious, but Jesus still has more for His people in terms of empowering grace.
- h. Born of the Spirit is not identical to baptized in the Spirit. Regeneration gives life; Spirit Baptism gives power. The disciples themselves prove the distinction.

### **III. Spirit Baptism Is Given for Empowerment, Not Mere Experience**

- a. [Act 1:8 NASB95] 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."
- b. [Act 2:1-4 NASB95] 1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
- c. Jesus told the disciples exactly why Spirit Baptism would come: power for witness. The word "power" is not about status, hype, or spiritual elitism. It is about divine enablement for the mission of God.
- d. When Acts 2 arrived, the Holy Spirit came in a supernatural, experiential, unmistakable way. There was sound, there were tongues as of fire, and they were all filled with the

## **Why Pentecost Matters – Because Spirit Baptism Is Real, Distinct, and Empowering**

### **Dr. John Carmichael**

Holy Spirit. Pentecost was not an abstract doctrine. It was an actual empowering encounter.

- e. Spirit Baptism matters because the church was never meant to carry out the mission of Christ in natural strength alone. The church needs more than organization, charisma, and effort. The church needs power from on high.
- f. Application: We must not seek Spirit Baptism merely to say we had an experience. We seek it because we need divine empowerment to live boldly, pray effectively, minister supernaturally, and witness courageously.
- g. Spirit Baptism is experiential, but not merely emotional. It is empowering, not ornamental. The purpose is witness, boldness, ministry, and mission.

#### **IV. The Book of Acts Presents Spirit Baptism as a Repeated Reality Beyond Conversion**

- a. [Act 8:12-17 NASB95] 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. 13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. 14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they [began] laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.
- b. [Act 10:44-48 NASB95] 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we [did,] can he?" 48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.
- c. [Act 19:1-6 NASB95] 1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. 2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they [said] to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they [began] speaking with tongues and prophesying.
- d. Acts does not present Spirit Baptism as a one-time doctrinal footnote. It presents it as a continuing reality in the life of the early church.
  - i. Acts 8 — Samaria - The Samaritans believed Philip's preaching and were baptized in water, but the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon them in this empowering way. Peter and John came, laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. This clearly shows that belief and Spirit reception in empowering fullness are distinguished in the narrative.
  - ii. Acts 10 — Cornelius' house - While Peter was preaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, and the Jewish believers knew it had happened because they heard them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Here the Spirit fell quickly, but still in a distinct, observable way.

## **Why Pentecost Matters – Because Spirit Baptism Is Real, Distinct, and Empowering**

### **Dr. John Carmichael**

- iii. Acts 19 — Ephesus - Paul found disciples and asked whether they had received the Holy Spirit. After ministry and laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.
- e. These passages show that Acts consistently presents Spirit Baptism as a real empowering encounter, not merely a synonym for conversion.
- f. Application: The church today should read Acts not as a museum record but as a Spirit-inspired witness to how God still empowers believers. What God did in Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, and Ephesus reveals His heart for the church.
- g. Acts repeatedly distinguishes salvation and Spirit empowerment. Spirit Baptism is not a theological accident in Acts. The pattern in Acts creates expectancy for today.

#### **V. Tongues Function as the Initial Physical Evidence of Spirit Baptism**

- a. [Act 2:4 NASB95] 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
- b. [Act 10:46 NASB95] 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,
- c. [Act 19:6 NASB95] 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they [began] speaking with tongues and prophesying.
- d. Why do Pentecostals say tongues are the initial physical evidence? Because that is the repeated outward sign attached to Spirit Baptism in the key Acts narratives.
- e. At Pentecost, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues.
- f. At Cornelius' house, they knew the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit because they heard them speaking with tongues.
- g. At Ephesus, when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they spoke with tongues and prophesied.
- h. Two instances of Spirit Baptism that did not specifically mention tongues is Paul (Acts 9 – we know he spoke in tongues; I Cor. 14:18) and Samaria (Acts 8 – v. 18 he “saw” something; no other outward manifestation other than tongues.)
- i. Pentecostal theology uses the phrase initial physical evidence carefully: Initial means it is the first outward sign, not the only work of the Spirit thereafter.
  - i. Physical means it is observable.
  - ii. Evidence means it confirms that this empowering experience has occurred.
- j. This does not mean tongues are the totality of spiritual maturity. Fruit remains essential. Character matters deeply. But it does mean tongues are the biblical sign that accompanies Spirit Baptism in these decisive Acts accounts.
- k. Application: We must not let modern discomfort erase biblical clarity. Tongues are not a strange embarrassment to be hidden. They are part of the biblical witness to Spirit Baptism. The answer to abuse is not rejection, but sound teaching and healthy practice.
- l. Tongues are not the goal; Jesus and empowerment are the goal. Yet tongues are not incidental; they are significant. We should not apologize for what Scripture repeatedly emphasizes.

#### **VI. The Promise of Spirit Baptism Is Still Available Now**

- a. [Act 1:4-5 NASB95] 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," [He said,] "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."
- b. [Act 2:38-39 NASB95] 38 Peter [said] to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of

## **Why Pentecost Matters – Because Spirit Baptism Is Real, Distinct, and Empowering**

### **Dr. John Carmichael**

the Holy Spirit. 39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

- c. Spirit Baptism is not merely historical. It is not locked inside the book of Acts as an unrepeatable event for the first century alone. Peter declared that the promise is "for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."
  - d. That means this promise reaches across generations and geography. The Spirit who fell then still fills now. The church does not need to admire Pentecost from a distance. The church can receive what Pentecost revealed.
  - e. This matters for North Church because vagueness kills hunger. But clarity creates faith. When people know that Spirit Baptism is real, distinct, biblical, and available, they begin to seek it with expectancy.
  - f. Application: Do not treat Spirit Baptism as a relic of your church tradition. Treat it as a promise from Jesus for believers now. Seek it. Teach it. Make room for it. Pray for it. Expect it.
  - g. The promise was not exhausted in Acts 2. God still baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit. The church should still expect the empowering work of the Spirit.
- **Spirit Baptism is a real, biblical, empowering work of Christ in the believer, distinct from regeneration, and its initial physical evidence is speaking in tongues.**
  - Receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues.
  - Receive a fresh stirring, boldness, and renewed flow in the Holy Spirit.
  - May North Church never become doctrinally Pentecostal but practically powerless.