
Power from on High

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Holy Spirit Baptism: Sermon Outline for the iValues Project

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I. Introduction

The Assemblies of God points to biblical passages which indicate that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Note carefully what this means. It is the *initial evidence*: the first thing that can be noticed. It is a *physical evidence*: the tongue and speech are both used, and this can be seen, heard, and verified. But speaking in tongues is not the *only* evidence, nor has the Assemblies of God claimed that it was.

Read Luke 24:45-49. Jesus promises that He will send the Holy Spirit, and He asks His disciples to wait in the city until the Holy Spirit comes. He says that when this happens, they will be “clothed with power from on high.”

We all know when we are clothed and when we are not. The Greek here literally means “to be clothed.” This indicates that we will have the Holy Spirit covering us, protecting us, making us look good, empowering us. Just like we would not go anywhere without our clothing, so as Christians we should not go anywhere without the Holy Spirit covering us. Without the Spirit, we are incomplete and unprepared for public ministry, but with Him, we are able to witness “to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (verse 47).

Again we see this promise made by Jesus in Acts 1:7-8. At this time, Jesus was leaving His disciples and ascending into heaven. In His last words He again says to them, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” Note that here again the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is referred to as including the gift of power for witness.

II. The Holy Spirit Baptism

A. What was the waiting period like?

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One can only imagine what it was actually like to wait for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. For one thing, the disciples did not know how long they would have to wait. (Fifty days from Easter and ten days from the day Jesus ascended into heaven.) Did some of them, like impetuous Peter, perhaps, want to go on out and start preaching? What was it really like to spend days, not just hours, in a long prayer meeting? They did not even know how long they would have to wait. Did some of them get tired and go home, missing the Baptism in the Holy Spirit when it finally arrived days later? If your pastor called you to an indefinite prayer meeting that ended up lasting ten days, would you wait and hold in there? Those who were willing to wait and tarry in the presence of the Lord ultimately were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

B. Characteristics of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)

When the Holy Spirit arrived, He did not do so quietly. Discuss the wind (and the power of a great wind). Give examples of being in a great wind or tornado. A mighty wind blows away so many things that are not tacked down. Likewise, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit removes things out our lives which do not belong there, making room for the fullness of the power of God!

Discuss the fire and what that must have looked like and accomplished in the people. It was like a blast from heaven. God wants to set us on fire so we are bold to proclaim the good news and step out in faith to heal and change people's lives.

Pentecost did not entail a slight breeze blowing back the cute, organza curtains, nor was it a tiny little flame, but rather a licking blaze. Something powerful and distinctive happened when these people were baptized in the Holy Spirit!

C. The Results of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:5 and on)

Speaking in tongues allowed witness to take place because those who were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost were able to hear the good news preached in their own language. It was an incredible sign!

Furthermore, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit provided Peter with the ability to preach in a mighty way (Acts 2: 14-40). He was bold to proclaim the good news. From this one sermon preached with the power of the Holy Spirit all over him, about 3,000 were saved and baptized in that one day alone!

III. The Power of the Holy Spirit Results in Signs and Wonders

A. Accreditation

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Acts contains many more verses which indicate the distinct link between the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and power to witness and work in signs and wonders that effectually draw hundreds of people to God.

In fact, in Acts 2:22 Peter talks about Jesus being “accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.” Universities and colleges go through a lot of trouble to be accredited by their regional accrediting associations, and here Peter points out that Jesus Himself was accredited by no less than God Himself! Furthermore, this accreditation was obvious because of the miracles, signs and wonders Jesus accomplished through the power of God. Being clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit is an act of accreditation!

B. Use Acts chapters 3 and 4 to tell the story of the healing of the crippled beggar.

1. Note how it happened. Bring the story alive.....how the crippled beggar was expecting only money but he got something far better. Discuss how the Sanhedrin didn't know what to do with Peter and John. They wanted them to stop preaching and ordered them to do so.
2. Today we might say, “Sure, whatever you say” and after they stopped berating us, we would probably tone it down a bit. But note what Peter and John said in Acts 4:19-20: “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”
3. Basically, they shrugged their shoulders and said, “Sorry, we can't help it! We have to keep speaking about this. We will, because we just can't keep quiet.” Surely the Sanhedrin was thinking, *Well, of course, you can. Just keep your mouths shut.* But when we are clothed with power from on high, we literally can't keep our mouths shut. We will speak about it! We just can't help it!
4. Note that in Acts 4:13 it states, “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” God uses ordinary people to accomplish His work. He makes them bold and uses them to demonstrate His power and grace.

IV. Application to Today

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- A. Apply this message to your own church and people. What does it mean for them? How can they be more effective in witness? God does not expect them to witness and do signs and wonders on their own. He wants to clothe them in the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants to set them on fire.
- B. In Argentina there was recently a young student at IBRP (Instituto Biblico Rio de la Plata), our Assemblies of God Bible School in Buenos Aires. Her name was Monica Obando, and during one of the school breaks, she felt that God was leading her to a remote town in Argentina. She had never been there before and didn't have any money to speak of, but by faith she got on a bus and took the long ride to this town. On the way she met someone on the bus who was a Christian and asked Monica to stay with her. Monica preached in that church the next Sunday and many people were healed and saved. She got invited to another church, and there were many signs and wonders. By the end of the summer, she had preached in every single church in town with remarkable results. When Monica left at the end of summer, more than 200 people showed up early in the morning at the bus station to see her off! She was clothed with the power of God, and lives were changed!
- C. If you want modern day examples of the power, signs and wonders referred to in the book of Acts, check out Rocky Gram's book *In Awe in Argentina* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2006). As a long-time missionary to this revival-blessed land, his book is replete with remarkable stories worth telling at this point. They will build faith in the people that these same things can happen today.
- D. Alternately, use other such stories from the U.S. or other missionaries. God is presently at work all over the world! There is nothing better than a fresh testimony.
- E. Call the people to the altars to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and be "clothed with power from on high."