

Baptism of the Holy Ghost and of Fire

I am not a big fan of new teachings. I would be forever in bliss with learning from Christians who have come and gone before me. Having said that, I am a proponent of truth. Many lies have been taught by taking part of a verse out of its context. I believe that this is one of those cases.

John, the baptist, was in the wilderness preaching. After seeing many Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he says, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"¹ He continues in his dialogue without interruption, that "he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire..."² At first glance it may seem that he is saying that the baptism of the Holy Ghost will be accompanied with fire. I submit to you that this is not what is being said when it is read with the verses before and after.

There is no scripture in the rest of the Bible that affirms that anyone was baptized with the Holy Ghost accompanied with fire. The first thing you may be thinking is that on the day of Pentecost, the disciples and many that were gathered with them were filled with the Holy Ghost and fire. It is worth reading this passage of scripture again, since it certainly contains both of the phrases "Holy Ghost" and "fire". While the group was waiting for the promise of the Holy Ghost, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing might wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them."³ Having read it, my hope is that it is obvious. If not, I will explain. The cloven tongues that sat upon each of them were like as of fire. The verse does not say the cloven tongues were fire. Fire is known for several things. Number one, it is hot. Number two, it is colorful. Number three, it needs fuel. Number four, it can take the shape

of cloven tongues. The cloven tongues mentioned in this verse is the shape of what sat upon them. It was not hot, orange, or smoky. It was not fire. It had the shape of fire. Now let us take a look at other scriptures that mention the Holy Ghost and fire. Wait a minute. There are no more. This is my point exactly.



Let us return to Matthew and look at the verses surrounding John's prophetic declaration that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."⁴

Notice the word fire directly before the word baptize is mentioned. "Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire." Also, take note of the word fire mentioned after the baptism. "He will gather his wheat into the garner but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." One

group is called wheat and gathered into the garner, the other is called chaff and burned in the fire. What other scriptures can we think of that talk of being cast into fire to be burned? "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire....and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire..."⁵ It seems to me the day is coming when some will be baptized with fire. Both John the baptist and Jesus spoke of this horrific day. Obey the commands to repent and trust the Saviour and God will baptize you with the Holy Ghost. Refuse to obey the gospel, and you will be justly punished for your sins against a righteous and Holy God.

Could it be that John was speaking symbolically? It could be symbolic. However, reading it in context removes the necessity of making the baptism with fire symbolic.

I can not say that I have seen or heard of anyone literally being baptized with fire. I have not read of this happening to Christians in the Bible. Neither have I read any book authored by Christians that speak of literal fire accompanying the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It may have happened, but not that I am aware of.

So, in my mind, we have at least three explanations. The fire either accompanies the baptism of the Holy Ghost symbolically, or it accompanies the baptism of the Holy Ghost literally, or there are two baptisms for two groups of people. At this point in time, I am leaning towards the two baptisms. This may also shed more light on the doctrine of baptisms(plural)⁶. If there is a baptism with the Holy Ghost and also a baptism with fire, which baptism will you partake of?

Footnotes

¹ Mat 3:7

² Mat 3:11

³ Act 2:2-3

⁴ Mat 3:7-12

⁵ Rev 20:15; Rev 21:8

⁶ Heb 6:2