

Podcast Episode 8: Baptism of Fire

QUESTION: What is the baptism of fire, and what is its effect on man?

DENVER: I've been asked to comment about the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, a subject that I tend generally to avoid, because it creates more conflict because of strongly held opinions than it ever should. But I'll take a run at it.

In James 5 verse 14 (I'm talking about the King James version of the Bible throughout in this response) it says if you've got any sick among you, have the elders come and pray and anoint with oil. Well, that's followed up in the verse next to that, 15, that it is the "prayer of faith" that will save the sick, "*...and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*" The reason why the sins are forgiven is because the act of healing, the process of healing by the "prayer of faith" invoking the power of the Holy Ghost, means that when the Holy Ghost comes upon the person, one of its acts is to purge from sin. The inner vessel is cleansed. The Holy Ghost cannot abide in an unclean vessel, and so the Holy Ghost cleanses the person, the inner vessel, before the healing takes place.

This is exactly like what happened when Christ healed in Matthew chapter 9. He begins by forgiving the sins of the lame person. That produced some criticism, and He asked which is easier, to say your sins are forgiven or, in verse 5, to say arise, take up your bed and walk? And then the person was healed, but he was healed and his sins were forgiven because the Holy Ghost is a purgative. That's why it's called "fire." Because fire is a purgative element.

If you want to sterilize a blade, you expose it to fire. Fire has a purgative effect that the Holy Ghost represents. In the process of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost and the visitation of fire, it's not necessary that something dramatic happen. In 3 Nephi 9:20, it says because of the faith of the Lamanites they "*were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost and they knew it not.*" Their sins got forgiven them. Their inner vessel got cleansed. They accepted and had poured out upon them the forgiveness of sins. But that doesn't mean that something dramatic happened or something notable to them happened. It means that their inner vessel was cleansed by the Holy Ghost. Their sins were forgiven.

On the other hand, in Acts 2:1-4, on the day of Pentecost, something dramatic did happen that the people could actually observe. In verse 2 it refers to a rushing of wind that everyone felt, noted-- it was apparent to them. In verse 3 it says there were "cloven tongues of fire" that were

visible. These things were symbols of the inner presence of the purgative nature of the Holy Ghost. They weren't the Holy Ghost, and they weren't the baptism of fire. They were, however, evidence, outward evidence that some inner cleansing had taken place. It is that inner cleansing that is the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.

Another example of a visible manifestation of the inner cleansing happens in Helaman chapter 5, where it describes a pillar of fire that descended upon Nephi and Lehi who were in the Lamanite prison. And that was a manifestation-- a visible manifestation for those people who were there-- of the power of the Holy Ghost cleansing these two men. They were pure vessels. They were people to whom those they were missionary-ing should have given heed, should've listened, should've repented.

Another physical manifestation of it is in Exodus chapter 34. When Moses returns from speaking with the Lord, verse 29 of Exodus 34 says his face was shining. And in the next verse it says people were afraid, and they kept away from him, in verse 30, because his face was shining, and it made them fearful. Well, what they feared was not a shining face-- it was the purity and the cleanliness of a person who was, at that moment, considerably more holy than were they. It intimidated them. But that outward manifestation of the shining face was not the power in Moses, it was the Holy Ghost. He was cleansed. He was forgiven of sin, and he had become like God in the sense that he was clean just as God is clean.

The ceremony of anointing with oil is a symbolic gesture to imitate what the Holy Ghost does. By having the face of the person who was anointed glisten, or shine, it is imitative of the presence of the Holy Ghost, which is the cleansing, the purging, the inner-vessel-fixing instrumentality used by God.

When you go to the doctrine of Christ in 3 Nephi chapter 11, it says that if you repent of your sins and they're forgiven to you by God as a result of your repentance in coming to Him and participating in the physical baptism to manifest the washing away of the sins, then you will be visited by fire and the Holy Ghost, meaning that the inner vessel will be purged as a result of the Holy Ghost's instrumentality. It doesn't mean that you have to have "cloven tongues of fire." It doesn't mean that you have to have a rushing wind. It doesn't mean that your face has to shine. All it means is that God forgives, purges, and cleanses the inner vessel through the power of the Holy Ghost, which He promises to do. But that doesn't mean that you won't, like the Lamanites, "know it not." It doesn't necessarily require that there be some physical manifestation.

And then finally one of the great examples of the fire and the Holy Ghost manifesting itself was Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, in which He, by being filled with the Holy Ghost's

purgative nature, was so cleansed that those who looked upon Him saw Him as a transfigured being of light.

All of those things are manifestations of the Holy Ghost. But the power that it manifests, the most desirable thing about the fire and the Holy Ghost, the greatness of the gift, consists of cleansing of the inner vessel and forgiving the sin of the person upon whom it is shed forth.

The foregoing answer was recorded on March 4th, 2018 by Denver Snuffer.