

## **Foundations 6c The Baptism of Fire**

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits”. **Hebrews 6:1-3**

“Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” **Luke 3:15-17**

John the Baptist outlines three phases of the fire of God:

- 1) He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor
- 2) He will gather the wheat into His barn
- 3) He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire

### **Purging Fire**

Wikipedia defines “winnowing” as “an agricultural method developed by ancient cultures for separating grain from chaff. It is also used to remove weevils or other pests from stored grain.”

The Lord will clean out His threshing floor by separating the grain (that which is true, righteous and valuable) from the chaff (that which is useless, unholy and contrary to God’s will). This speaks of the fire of God in the life of the believer to purify.

The book of Isaiah records an account of the fire of God purging the prophet Isaiah.

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy *is* the Lord of hosts; the whole earth *is* full of His glory!” And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: “Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.” Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here *am* I! Send me.” **Isaiah 6:1-8**

Fire illuminates. In the light of majesty and holiness of God, Isaiah was convicted of his previously unseen sin. Crying out that he was “undone”, the Lord responded by sending a fiery coal from heaven to purge him. Let us regularly pray for the Holy Spirit’s purging fire to illuminate, purify and liberate us from sin and its’ negative effects. He will do it if we ask Him to.

After Isaiah was purged he was commissioned by the Lord. If we are to be sent forth as ambassadors of Christ, let us first seek and embrace His sanctifying fire.

“And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts. “But who can endure the day of His coming?”

And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. **Malachi 3:1b-3**

“For our God is a consuming fire.” **Hebrews 12:29**

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” **1 Thes. 5:23-24**

### **Evangelism Fire**

The second “phase” of the baptism of fire is the “fire” of evangelism with signs and wonders to gather in the harvest. We see this on the day of Pentecost.

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

**Acts 2:1-4**

In **Acts 2:14-37** Peter preached with Holy Spirit fire. The listeners were “cut to the heart” (vs. 37). He concluded his message as follows.

“Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”

The 120 disciples who were baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire on the day of Pentecost had previously experienced the “purging fire” of the God, even while they were in the upper room, praying and waiting on the Lord (Acts 1:13-14). We can see some of the effects of the fire of God as we contrast the behavior of the twelve at the Last Supper and again on the day of Pentecost. At the Last Supper, there was a dispute among the disciples concerning which of them should be the greatest (Luke 22:24). On the day of Pentecost “Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice” and preached to the people. Now the 12 were no longer disputing but standing up together. It seems that selfish ambition and competition had been purged by the fire of God. If we desire to walk in the fullness of the “fire” of evangelism with signs and wonders, perhaps we should first submit to the purging fire of the Holy Spirit.

### **Judgment Fire – burning up the chaff**

After embracing the purging fire and walking in the evangelism fire, the Acts church was thriving as they continued to meet daily in one accord.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” **Acts 2:42-47**

## **Burning up the Chaff**

In Acts chapters 3 and 4 many thousands more people were added to the church as the fire of God burned in their midst. Holy fire with signs and wonders (Acts 2:3-8, Acts 4:30) along with great power and great grace rested upon them all. Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, entered this holy atmosphere with impure hearts and deceptive words. As recorded in Acts 5, they both suffered the judgment fire of God as He “burned the chaff with unquenchable fire”.

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?” She said, “Yes, for so much.” Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.” **Acts 5:1-11**

## **The fear of God preserves purity in the church**

Purity (the purging fire) precedes power (evangelism fire), and the fear of God preserves the purity in the church. This “fear of the Lord” protects the saints from defilement and contamination so that we do not lose the manifest presence, power and grace of God.

Without the baptism of holy fire the harvest is not brought into the house of God.

“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” **Psalm 19:9**

“The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.”

**Proverbs 14:27**

Let us seek the Lord for His purifying, holy fire and receive His evangelism fire with signs, wonders and power to bring in the harvest. Let us walk in purity of heart and in the fear of the Lord, that we may never experience the fire of His judgment.