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Baptism of Fire

Marshall Patton

Question: “What is the baptism of fire in Matt. 3:11? Does this refer to the “cloven tongues” in Acts 2:3?—B.H.”

Answer: In determining the meaning of any verse one should always examine it carefully in the light of its context. The need for this practice cannot be emphasized too much. Many verses remain obscure in their meaning and are often misunderstood, misused, and abused simply because their context is ignored.

The context of Matt. 3:11 shows that John was calling upon the Jews to “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (v. 8). This was in keeping with John’s mission, namely, preparing the Jews for the coming of the Lord and His kingdom (Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 4:5; Matt. 3:3). In verse nine he shows that just being a literal descendant of Abraham would not suffice to make one a part of that people prepared for the Lord. One must obey John’s message. Verse ten shows the consequence of disobedience. All such will be cut down and cast into the fire. While John administered water baptism, he says, “he that cometh after me...shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” John could not administer the latter two. No man can! Hence, the Lord is superior to all men—even “mightier” than John! Verse twelve tells us when the Lord will administer the baptism of fire. It will be at the harvest time when the good and bad shall be separated one from another. The righteous (wheat) will be gathered into his garner. The wicked (chaff) will be burned up with unquenchable fire (Cf. Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:12-15). Hence, the baptism of fire of Matt. 3:11 is the fire of everlasting punishment. It is the “lake of fire” of Rev. 12:14-15.

This baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11) does not refer to the “cloven tongues” of Acts 2:3. The cloven tongue of Acts 2:3 were not of fire but were “like as fire.” While the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire are mentioned in the same verse there is no indication that they were to be administered at the same time. Both were mentioned in contrast to John’s baptism

and to prove that he who would administer them was “mightier” than John. When the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was renewed to the apostles in Acts 1:5 there was added the expression “not many days hence.” The baptism of fire is not mentioned here. Obviously, it was many days hence. However, concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it was “not many days hence.” (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4).

Note: Article taken from, “Answers for Our Hope,” pg., 40-41.

What Will We Look Like In Heaven?

Gene Frost

Answer: “Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2) There is nothing physical to which we can compare our appearance in heaven. The reason for this is that the physical entity of man will become spiritual: “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” (1 Cor. 15:50) The “things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Cor. 4:18)

The spirit of man is now housed in a material body, its composition being material components: “of the

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dust of the ground.” (Gen. 2:7) At death “shall return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.” (Eccl. 12:7) This does not mean, however, that by reason of death man’s spirit will be left without a body in the resurrection. “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, and house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.” (2 Cor. 5:1-3)

Whence comes this body and what is it like? This question was raised in 1 Corinthians 15:35, “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” The writer proceeds to show that there are different bodies of different compositions. Even so, “there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (Verse 44) “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” (Verse 49) From the material composition there must be a change to a spiritual, noncorporeal, composition. We “shall all be changed, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (Verses 51-52) And so it is that the body “is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” (Verse 44)

And so it is that when man passes from this material realm (for the universe, all materiality, will be destroyed; 2 Pet. 3:10, Matt. 24:35, Heb. 1:10-12) into the spiritual, he must also undergo a change. The natural body must be transformed into a spiritual body. Christ will “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21). What this composition is we cannot know, the finite mind being incapable of comprehending the infinite and the material experience being incapable of encompassing the spiritual realm.

What of man’s identity? True identity is in character and not physical appearance. What man is within, the soul of man, will not change. It is the “outward man (that will) perish, yet the inward man is renewed (revitalized) day by day.” (1 Cor. 4:16) From the material realm to the spiritual, man will move from a physical body into a spiritual body. The spirit (man himself) is the same; only the body undergoes a change. And this changed appearance we do not know now, except that it will be spiritual like unto Christ’s glorious body.

Note: Article taken from, “Bible Answers,” Vol. I, pg. 71-73

Definition of Consecration

A woman asked a minister to explain what consecration means.

Holding up a blank sheet of paper, he replied, “It is to sign your name at the bottom of this blank sheet and let God fill it in as he desires.”

From: “church bulletin bits,” # 4, pg. 28

Remember: Upcoming meeting with Eric Krieg, March 29—April 3—Make plans now to attend

Remember: Those of our number who are going through difficult times due to illness, surgeries, etc.