

LESSON: THE TRUE SAINTS, ABIDING COMPANION

“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” (Matt. 3:11.)

LESSON CONCEPT

No man can be saved in the celestial kingdom unless he is baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. In the meridian of time, Jesus came to offer this baptism of the Spirit to men. Every prophet and righteous man who has or will hold the Higher Priesthood, from the day of Adam to the last man, offers this same cleansing and sanctifying power to men.

AS JESUS SAW IT

Jesus taught the eternal truths of his gospel in two ways—by precept and by example.

For instance, he explained in plain words that men must repent, forsake the world, be baptized in water, and then receive the sanctifying and cleansing power of the Holy Spirit in their lives in order to be inheritors of the celestial kingdom. But to place, as it were, a capstone on his doctrine, he himself submitted to the eternal law of baptism. He was first immersed in water by his cousin John, whom he had sent as his forerunner, and then, by the power of the Father, the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God descended upon him.

When John, in the power and majesty of his ministry, as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, preached on the banks of Jordan, he commanded his hearers to repent and be baptized. To all who would so do, he gave this promise:

“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 thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matt. 3:11-12, Ital. added.)

After John had taught the doctrine of baptism of water and of the Spirit, the scriptural record recites Jesus’ conformity to the law in these words:

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:13-17.)

IN TODAY'S SETTING

On every hand there are instances in the Church today of faithful members whose lives are changed and preserved by the power of the Holy Ghost. A sin-laden person receives the gospel, repents, is baptized, receives the gift of the Holy Ghost, and immediately his whole life changes. He forsakes the world; finds new friends; gives up his tea, Coffee, tobacco, and liquor; and turns from a course of immorality and dishonesty to one of virtue and integrity. He becomes a new creature of the Holy Ghost.

Almost immediately he is standing up in sacrament meetings and bearing testimony that Jesus is the Christ and Joseph Smith is a prophet; soon he is preaching by the spirit of inspiration, expressing concepts and expounding doctrines totally beyond any native talent he possesses; soon, also, he is getting inspiration in his personal affairs, he is prompted to do things that preserve him in perilous circumstances, he is healing *the* sick, receiving revelations and visions of his own—indeed, he has become and now is a saint, a true saint, one who is frequently in tune with the Lord by the power of the Spirit.

Among the hosts of illustration of these principles, let us take this one from the pen of President Wilford Woodruff:

“The teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith to President John Taylor and the rest of us was to obtain the Holy Spirit, get acquainted with it and its operations, and listen to the whisperings of that Spirit and obey its voice, and it soon will become a principle of revelation unto us

“In 1848, after my return to Winter Quarters from our pioneer journey, I was appointed by the Presidency of the Church to take my family and go to Boston, to gather up the remnant of the Saints and lead them to the valleys of the mountains.

“While on my way east I put my carriage into the yard of one of the brethren in Indiana, and Brother Orson Hyde set his wagon by the side of mine, and not more than two feet from it.

“Dominicus Carter, of Provo, and my wife and four children were with me. My wife, one child, and I went to bed in the carriage, the rest sleeping in the house.

“I had been in bed but a short time, when a voice said to me, ‘Get up, and move your carriage.’

“It was not thunder, lightning, nor an earthquake, but the still, small voice of the Spirit of God—the Holy Ghost.

“I told my wife I must get up and move my carriage. She asked: ‘What for?’

“I told her I did not know, only the Spirit told me to do it.

“I got up and moved my carriage several rods, and set it by the side of the house.

“As I was returning to bed, the same spirit said to me, ‘Go and move your mules away from that oak tree,’ which was about one hundred yards north of our carriage.

“I moved them to a young hickory grove and tied them up. I then went to bed.

“In thirty minutes a whirlwind caught the tree to which my mules had been fastened, broke it off near the ground and carried it one hundred yards, sweeping away two fences in its course, and laid it prostrate through that yard where my carriage stood, and the top limbs hit my carriage as it was.

“In the morning I measured the trunk of the tree which fell where my carriage had stood, and I found it to be five feet in circumference. It came within a foot of Brother Hyde’s wagon, but did not touch it.

“Thus by obeying the revelation of the Spirit of God to me I saved my life, the lives of my wife and child, as well as my animals.” (Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves From My Journal*, pp. 101-102.)

THE MASTER’S WAY

Before men can gain the abiding companionship of the Holy Spirit, they must come to a knowledge of God and his laws. They must learn the doctrines of salvation, which center in Christ, and which promise to men the guidance and enlightenment of the Holy Ghost. There is no more important enterprise in which men can ever engage than that of seeking the Spirit of the Lord. When the Nephite disciples prayed “for that which they most desired,” their petition was “that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.” (3 Ne. 19:9.)

This designation, “the Holy Ghost,” however, does not always have the same scriptural meaning. By way of brief summary, the scriptures use the exalted name-title, the Holy Ghost, in at least the following ways:

1. The Holy Ghost—A personage

“The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. He is a Personage of Spirit, a Spirit Person, a Spirit Man, a Spirit Entity. He can be in only one place at one time, and he does not and cannot transform himself into any other form or image than that of the Man whom he is, though his power and influence can be manifest at one and the same time through all immensity. (D&C 130:22-23; *Teachings*, p. 190, 275-276; *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed, pp. 59-62.)

“He is the Comforter, Testator, Revelator, Sanctifier, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit of Promise, Spirit of Truth, Spirit of the Lord, and Messenger of the Father and the Son, and his

companionship is the greatest gift that mortal man can enjoy. His mission is to perform all of the functions appertaining to the various name-titles which he bears. Because he is a Spirit Personage, he has power—according to the eternal laws ordained by the Father—to perform essential and unique functions for men. In this dispensation, at least, nothing has been revealed as to his origin or destiny; expressions on these matters are both speculative and fruitless.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p, 359.)

2. The Holy Ghost—Meaning the Gift of the Holy Ghost

“‘There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost,’ the Prophet taught. (*Teachings*, p. 199.) As the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost is a Personage of Spirit; the gift of the Holy Ghost, however, is the right, based on faithfulness, to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead. It is the right to receive revelation, guidance, light, and truth from the Spirit. ‘The presentation or “gift” of the Holy Ghost,’ President Joseph F. Smith said, ‘simply confers upon a man the right to receive at any time, when he is worthy of it and desires it, the power and light of truth of the Holy Ghost, although he may often be left to his own spirit and judgment.’ (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., pp. 60-61.)

“Joseph Smith explained: ‘Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him. Until he obeyed these ordinances and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands, according to the order of God, he .could not have healed the sick, or commanded an evil spirit to come out of a man, and it obey him.’ (*Teachings*, p. 199.)

“In similar manner, in this day,- many nonmembers of the Church, ‘by the power of the Holy Ghost’ (Moro. 10:4-5), learn that the Book of Mormon is true, or that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God, but unless they repent and are baptized that flash of testimony leaves them. They never receive the continuing, renewed assurance that comes from the companionship of that Spirit Being whose mission it is to whisper truth to the spirits within men. (*Teachings*, pp. 198-199.)

“Further, the fact that a person has had hands laid on his head and a legal administrator has declared, ‘Receive the Holy Ghost,’ does not guarantee that the gift itself has actually been enjoyed. The gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to have the constant companionship of the Spirit; the actual enjoyment of the gift, the actual receipt of the companionship of the Spirit, is based on personal righteousness; it does not come unless and until the person is worthy to receive it. The Spirit will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19.) Those who actually enjoy the gift or presentment of the Holy Ghost are the ones who are born again, who have become new creatures of the Holy Ghost. (Mosiah 27:24-26.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., pp. 312-313.)

3. The Holy Ghost—Meaning the Power of the Holy Ghost

Jesus told his disciples: “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 15:26.) Our Lord also said: “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:13.)

Nephi said that “the Holy Ghost . . . witnesses of the Father and the Son.” (2 Ne. 31:18.) Joseph Smith said: “The Holy Ghost is a Revelator.” Also: “No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 328.) And Moroni said that any person who would read the Book of Mormon, ponder its teachings in his heart, and ask God, in faith, in the name of Christ, if it is true, would have the truth, of it manifest unto him, “by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

Then Moroni summarized the eternal laws relative to the receipt of revelation from the Spirit by saying: “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” (Moro. 10:3-5.)

To those who seek knowledge by faith, the Lord has given this promise: “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation.” (D&C 8:2-3.)

There are, thus, eternal laws by conformity to which mortal man can receive light and truth and knowledge, “by the power of the Holy Ghost.” That is, there is a way provided whereby the Holy Spirit can speak to the spirit within a man so that light and truth are poured into the human soul. This applies to a degree to all men; all can come to know of the divinity of the Lord’s work; all can learn that the Book of Mormon is the voice of God to this generation. Those who walk in the light thus received and are baptized of water and of the Spirit are then entitled to the constant companionship of the Spirit. They are the ones who are prepared to learn all things by the power of the Holy Ghost.

It was in conformity with these principles that Nephi made his great proclamation about “the power of the Holy Ghost,” which, he said, “is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men. For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him. For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.” (1 Ne. 10:17-19.)

Having now noted the chief ways in which the term Holy Ghost is used in the scriptures, let us view him as the Sanctifier, as the one by whose power men are purified from all sin, as the one who baptizes by fire.

To the Nephites came these words from the lips of the Resurrected Lord: “Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the

last day.” (3 Ne. 27:20.) In other words, men are promised the baptism of fire, they are promised that the Holy Ghost will bum dross and evil out of their souls as though by fire.

““The baptism of the Spirit is called the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; 2 Ne. 31:13-14; 3 Ne. 11:35; 12:1-2; Moro. 7:10; D&C 20:41; 33:11; 39:6.) By the power of the Holy Ghost—who is the Sanctifier (3 Ne. 27:19-21)—dross, iniquity, carnality, sensuality, and every evil thing is burned out of the repentant soul as if by fire; the cleansed person becomes literally a new creature of the Holy Ghost. (Mosiah 27:24-26.) He is born again.

“The baptism of fire is not something in addition to the receipt of the Holy Ghost; rather, it is the actual enjoyment of the gift which is offered by the laying on of hands at the time of baptism. ‘Remission of sins,’ the Lord says, comes ‘by baptism and by fire yea, even the Holy Ghost.’ (D&C 19:31; 2 Ne. 31:17.) Those who receive the baptism of fire are ‘filled as if with fire.’ (Hela. 5:45.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p, 73.)

By way of summary, then, the gospel law includes these eternal truths:

1. Those who repent and are baptized, who receive the Holy Ghost and work righteousness, shall be saved in the celestial kingdom.
2. Those who do not believe and are not baptized shall be damned. (3 Ne. 11:33-34.)
3. The Holy Ghost is offered to all men to reveal to them the truth of the gospel, to give them a testimony of the Divine Sonship of our Lord, to bear record to them that God has spoken in this day and has again set up his kingdom on earth.
4. Those who then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost—that is, who gain the right to the constant companionship of this member of the Godhead—are in a position to advance in knowledge until they know all things; they can receive the baptism of fire which cleanses and sanctifies their souls; they can become “new creatures,” and be “born of the Spirit” (Mosiah 27:24-261; and they can, of course, be preserved in perilous circumstances, as their needs and situations warrant.

WALKING IN HIS STEPS

Now let us return to the text statements about Jesus baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire and about his own baptism and receipt of the Holy Ghost. (Matt. 3:11-17.) The Biblical account is amplified and explained by Nephi in these words:

“And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water! And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water?

Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments. Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove. And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them. And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father? And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son. And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.” (2 Ne. 31:5-13.)

To follow in the footsteps of Jesus, where the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire is concerned, is simply:

1. To gain a testimony of the truth of the gospel by the power of the Holy Ghost;
2. To be baptized by a legal administrator whose act will be binding on earth and in heaven;
3. To receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; and
4. To “follow the Son, with full purpose of heart,” keeping the commandments until the soul is sanctified and the candidate for salvation can “speak with the tongue of angels.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the statement that the course of the Lord is one eternal round? How is this related to the power of the Holy Ghost?
2. When and among what peoples has the power and gift of the Holy Ghost been manifest on earth? Did Abraham, for instance, have the companionship of the Spirit?
3. To what extent can nonmembers of the Church receive guidance from the Holy Ghost? What is the difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost?

4. What is a testimony of the gospel? Why and how does it come from the Spirit? What is meant by the still small voice?

5. Who receives the baptism of fire? Does it come automatically with church membership or is something more required? Is baptism an end or a beginning? What does it mean to be sanctified by the Spirit?

6. Can any accountable person be saved without belief in Christ? Without baptism of water? Without baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire? Except by obedience to the commandments after baptism?

7. Why was Christ baptized? What does it mean to fulfil all righteousness?

In what sense is Christ the Prototype for men?

CHALLENGE AND APPLICATION

For most people the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire is something that occurs gradually. That is, sin and evil are burned out of the human soul by degrees, one step at a time.

Becoming sanctified is a process; it happens a little at a time. Seekers after salvation become pure and spotless in one field today and in another tomorrow. They pay an honest tithe today and live the law of consecration tomorrow. They work out their salvation by successive steps of obedience.

Hence, each member of the Church should start where he or she now is and either begin or continue the process of sanctification, of burning dross and evil out of the soul, of receiving the companionship of the Spirit. All should seek the Spirit; and the more grounded and secure a person is in the faith, the more he should seek and desire personal revelation and that preserving care which God alone, by the power of his Spirit, can and does confer upon his faithful children.