

The Baptism Of Fire

John the Baptist says in Matthew 3:11, *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."*

This statement is sadly taken out of context by certain people who view the baptism of fire as something beneficial to an individual. They believe that these benefits are somewhat similar to those of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, also mentioned in the context of Matthew 3. Of course, these individuals also do not even understand what the baptism of the Holy Spirit was for. But let's examine this baptism of fire for just a moment in the context of Matthew three, and see if it is something that is actually good for a person to experience.

First of all, the statement was made by John the Baptist who was speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees about repenting and bearing fruits worthy of repentance (Matthew 3:8). He then makes the statement in vs. 10, *"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."* Here he expresses what will happen to the tree that does not bear good fruit. It is good for nothing and is therefore cut down and cast into the fire.

Next, he makes the statement in vs. 11 about one coming after him who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, which is referring to Jesus. He finally uses the example in vs. 12 of the wheat and chaff and what happens to the chaff when it is separated from the wheat. *"His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."* Here we find that the chaff is the bad part of the wheat and is therefore separated by wind, blown by the fan. Like the tree that does not bear good fruit, the chaff is also burned in the fire.

Here are two clear examples: one of the tree that does not bear good fruit, and one of the chaff separated from the wheat. Both are useless, and therefore are separated from the good and cast into the fire. Now, consider the baptism of fire and compare it with the fire used in the other two illustrations. The two fires mentioned in vss. 10 and 12 are fires of destruction and judgment on what was no good. Since this is the case, we must conclude that the baptism of fire is referring to a destruction or judgment too. It definitely doesn't seem like something you would *want* to have happen to you. With this in mind, there are only two judgments that

this could be describing: the destruction of Jerusalem or the final judgment. It is more likely to be the final judgment because of the phrase "*unquenchable fire*" mentioned in Matthew 3:12. Whichever one it is, it does not take away from the fact that the baptism of fire was a judgment to be passed and is definitely not something someone would want to have happen to them.

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