Baptism
with Fire

Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture references are from the New King James Version.
Lesson 9

Baptism with Fire

Key Verse: “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 right 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 3:16-17 (NKJV)

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to help the disciple embrace the baptism with fire as the Lord’s process to bring His people into full maturity and service. Trials, temptations, tribulations, adversities, pressures, and persecution can become God’s purifying instruments to separate from us from the influence of the flesh, the world, and the devil.

1. Three Ways God Purifies His People

   • The Blood of Jesus: The Old Testament sacrifices were made to atone for the sins of the people and were necessary to purify the priests that served the Lord in His tabernacle. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22). In the New Testament, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (I John 1:7). When we believe in and accept the blood of Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins, His blood cleanses and removes from us all sin that we have committed.

   • The Word of God: Once we are saved, we must be purified (or renewed) in our minds (Romans 12:2). Because of our past life in sin, rebellion, and exposure to this world’s system of values and beliefs, we must be transformed and purified in our thinking. God does this through the word of God as we read, study, meditate and apply it in our lives (Ephesians 5:26). The word of God will help purify our hearts of ungodly beliefs, philosophies, and useless religious concepts and renew our minds to the truth of God that sets us free (John 8:31-32).

   • The Fire of God: Water can cleanse surface impurities, but it takes fire to consume and to refine. Fire will consume all that can be burned, and will refine metal by bringing hidden and internal impurities to the surface so that they can be gathered and discarded. The baptism of fire is sent to purify our hearts through a series of fiery trials. The work of sanctification begins when we are baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit and continues throughout our lives as we walk with Jesus. The instrument of this holy work in our hearts is the Holy Spirit.

2. Jesus Christ is the Baptizer with fire.

   • Matthew 3:11-12 (NKJV) “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.”

3. The Baptism with Fire burns up chaff.

   • Matthew 3:12 (NKJV) “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.”

   “Chaff” is the shell or husk that encases the wheat kernel that is broken loose during threshing and blown away during winnowing.

4. Spiritually, the chaff refers to two things:

   • The carnal (fleshly) nature.

   • The wicked.
5. The Baptism with Fire can also refer to the shakings of God.
   - Hebrews 12:25-29 (NKJV) “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.’ Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”

6. In times of renewal, Jesus will come to His people as a refiner’s fire and as launderer’s soap.
   - Malachi 3:1-2 (NKJV) “Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. 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.”

7. Jesus comes to purify His people and to restore righteousness.
   - Malachi 3:3-4 (NKJV) “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. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years.”

8. The Baptism with Fire can also be described as a time of testing or trial.
   - Jeremiah 17:10 (NKJV) “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.”
   - Psalm 66:10 (NKJV) “For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined.”
   - Proverbs 17:3 (NKJV) “The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the hearts.”

9. Our heart is deceitful. Therefore we cannot know it.
   - Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV) “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”
   - Proverbs 20:9 (NKJV) “Who can say, ‘I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin’?”
   - Proverbs 28:26 (NKJV) “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered.”

10. Since we do not know our own heart, we should ask God to search our heart.
    - Psalm 139:23-24 (NKJV) “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
    - Psalm 26:2 (NKJV) “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart.”

11. The condition of our heart is important for many reasons:
    - God looks at our heart (1 Samuel 16:7).
    - Out of our heart spring the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).
    - What is in our heart will determine the thoughts in our mind (Proverbs 23:7).
    - The pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8)
    - Our heart determines what we treasure (Matthew 6:21)
    - All sin originates in the heart (Matthew 15:19).
    - We might fool others but God knows our heart (Acts 15:8).

12. Although God does not tempt anyone, God will initiate times of testing in our lives.
    - Matthew 4:1 (NKJV) “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.”
The Fire of Testing and Temptation

The Scripture is clear—we do not know what is in our heart. But God does! We are responsible to change our heart, but only God can show us what we need to change. Because we do not know what is really in our heart, God will place us in the refiner’s fire to bring those impurities to the surface where we can see them. He already knows they are there. His purpose is not to shame us, but to perfect holiness in our heart. Granted, the fire of God can be painful, but like precious gold and silver, we must be refined time and time again until all the dross is removed. One of the refiner’s fires can be temptation. God never tempts anyone, but He can allow temptation to cross our path to reveal what is in our heart (see James 1:12-15). We can only be tempted through wicked desires already present within our heart. Satan is the tempter, but God will use temptation as a test of our love for Him (John 14:15). God has promised that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to endure, but with the temptation will provide a way of escape so that we can overcome it (1 Corinthians 10:13). Why does He promise this? It is because God does not intend temptation to destroy us but to test us our love for Him.

Another refiner’s fire can be the test of obedience. God tested Abraham’s commitment to Him by asking him to sacrifice Isaac, his only son (Genesis 22:1-2). Abraham’s faith in God was strong and he passed the test by obeying God. God intervened and said, “Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” (v. 12 NKJV). What God asks us to do can be very painful to fulfill. Jesus was obedient even unto death on the cross. The test of obedience will consume away our independent, rebellious, and selfish nature making our faith as precious gold in the sight of God. Another refiner’s fire can be affliction and persecution. This fire usually comes from unbelievers. When we suffer for Christ’s sake, our faith and love is purified. The non-essentials and excess baggage begins to melt off of us in this fire. A genuine love for Jesus, for our brethren, and even for our enemies overtakes us, making us more like Jesus. Refiner’s fires also include trials, pressures, adversities, and problems whether they are caused by situations, people, or by ourselves. They can bring the worst out of us. But that is the point. God knows it is in there. Because He is refining our heart, He intends to bring it out. When we feel the refiner’s fire heating up in our lives, we must not despise it. We must not reject it. We must not run from it. We must not harden our heart. We must not blame someone else. God may allow Satan, people, and circumstances to heat up the fire, but we are the gold that God is refining. Jesus embraced the work of God in the cross and did not curse those whom God allowed to carry it out. Even so we must embrace the work of Jesus our Refiner, the One who baptizes us with fire. When we do, we are sure to come forth as pure gold and conformed to His image.

13. God allows trials in order to test our faith. Therefore we should embrace every test with joy knowing that the test carries with it the potential to enrich our faith and bring forth a testimony for God’s glory.
   - James 1:2 (NKJV) “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,”
   - “It is better to pass the test and get a testimony than to fail and get the moanies.”

14. The testing of our faith produces patience which allows us to become perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
   - James 1:4 (NKJV) “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

15. God is looking for faith and obedience during times of testing and suffering.
   - Hebrews 5:8 (NKJV) “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”
   - Hebrews 11:17 (NKJV) “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,”

16. God will test us with wilderness experiences.
   - The “wilderness” is a time of delayed fulfillment of God’s promise. Faith and patient endurance is required to stay steadfastly obedient to the Lord until His word is fulfilled.
   - Deuteronomy 8:2 (NKJV) “And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.”
   - Psalm 105:19 (NKJV) “Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him.”

17. The Baptism with Fire can also be illustrative of taking up the cross.
   - Luke 12:49-50 (NKJV) “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!”
• Matthew 20:22 (NKJV) “But Jesus answered and said, ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’” They said to Him, ‘We are able.’"

• Matthew 16:24-26 (NKJV) “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’”

18. When we fail the tests before us, we should learn to receive correction from our Heavenly Father knowing that He loves us and is committed to our graduation into victory.

• Hebrews 12:5-11 (NKJV) “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

19. The suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.

• Romans 8:18 (NKJV) “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

20. During times of testing it is important to keep our eyes on the joy set before us—the blessing on the other side of the test.

• Hebrews 12:1-2 (NKJV) “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”