

Luke 3:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

Analysis

John declares: 'I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh...he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' John contrasts his water baptism (symbolizing repentance) with Messiah's Spirit baptism (effecting transformation). The phrase 'mightier than I' (Greek 'ischyroteros mou,' ἰσχυρότερός μου) emphasizes Christ's superior power and authority—John isn't worthy to loose His shoe latch. Spirit baptism is Pentecost's promise (Acts 1:5, 2:1-4), while fire baptism suggests both purifying judgment and refining power. Christ's baptism doesn't merely symbolize change but actually accomplishes it through the Holy Spirit's power.

Historical Context

Old Testament prophets promised Spirit outpouring in the messianic age (Joel 2:28-29, Ezekiel 36:25-27). John's announcement that Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit identified him as the one who would fulfill these prophecies. The 'fire' imagery recalls both purifying fire (Malachi 3:2-3) and judging fire (Matthew 3:12). Pentecost fulfilled this promise—tongues of fire appeared as the Spirit descended (Acts 2:3). John's ministry pointed beyond itself to Messiah's greater work.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does John's contrast between water baptism and Spirit baptism illustrate the difference between outward ritual and inward transformation?
2. What does the combination of Holy Spirit and fire baptism teach about both the purifying and judging aspects of Christ's work?

Interlinear Text

ἀπεκρίνατο	ὁ	Ἰωάννης	ἅπασιν	λέγων,	Ἐγὼ	μὲν	
answered	G3588	John	unto them all	saying	I	indeed	
G611		G2491	G537	G3004	G1473	G3303	
ὕδατι	βαπτίσει	ὑμᾶς	ἔρχεται	δὲ	ὁ	ἰσχυρότερός	μου
with water	baptize	you	cometh	but	G3588	one mightier than	I
G5204	G907	G5209	G2064	G1161		G2478	G3450
οὗ	οὐκ	εἰμὶ	ἱκανὸς	λῦσαι	τὸν	ἱμάντα	τῶν
of whose	not	I am	worthy	to unloose	G3588	the latchet	G3588
G3739	G3756	G1510	G2425	G3089		G2438	
ὑποδημάτων	αὐτὸς	αὐτὸς	ὑμᾶς	βαπτίσει	ἐν	πνεύματι	
shoes	he	he	you	baptize	with	Ghost	
G5266	G846	G846	G5209	G907	G1722	G4151	
ἁγίῳ	καὶ	πυρί·					
the Holy	and	with fire					
G40	G2532	G4442					

Additional Cross-References

Acts 1:5 (Holy): For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Matthew 3:11 (Holy): 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:

John 1:33 (Holy): And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

John 1:26 (Baptism): John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

1 Corinthians 12:13 (Spirit): For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Isaiah 4:4 (Spirit): When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

Isaiah 32:15 (Spirit): Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

Proverbs 1:23 (Spirit): Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

Zechariah 13:9 (Parallel theme): And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

Acts 2:33 (Holy): Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.