

## **Book Review: We are Called for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit** by Daniel H. Chew

**Book:** Norman A.S. King, *We are Called for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (Dallas, TX: Word Ministry Trust, reprint 2011)

This book by Dr. Norman A.S. King, a Tanzanian pastor, is written with the intent to help Christians grow in Christ, which to him is through what he calls the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Before we begin, I would like to mention that I have received the book initially in Kindle format. One gripe I have is the formatting of the book is off at various places. Paragraphs were not justified, some lines have one word followed by the next word found in the next line, and pagination is completely absent in the Kindle version. For pagination, I have to look at the PDF version, and all page numbers will be based on that. Also, sections begin almost anywhere in a page, not on a new page by itself. Thus, we see in the PDF version the preface begins at the end of a page which has the contents at the top, while chapter 1 follows immediately after the acknowledgments, and so on. The Kindle version has the preface in a new “page,” but other chapters similarly flow one into another with just headings to indicate that a new chapter has been reached. Furthermore, citation of Bible verses in for example the last chapter are not placed in blockquotes so that it is unclear on the surface if the paragraphs there are from the Bible or the author’s own words. In other words, the book is not professionally done.

The book itself is divided into twelve chapters. Chapter one, entitled “For God so loved the world,” looks at Gen. 1 and speaks about God loving creation. Chapter two speaks about God’s love for Adam, while chapter three speaks of the creation of Eve and the Fall of Man, with a focus on the Devil as the Enemy. Chapter four speaks of the way to victory over the devil through being led by the Spirit, chapter five of the importance of keeping the commandments as a means to conquer the world easily, chapter six deals with the forms the efforts of Man to please God take, chapter seven with the birth of Jesus and the need to love Him and follow His commands, and chapter eight with the reality of John the Baptist’ message and baptism. Chapter eight deals with the significance of John’s water baptism, while chapter nine deals with the Baptism of the Spirit. Chapter eleven deals with the inferiority of education to the Baptism of the Spirit, while chapter twelve concludes with saying that we must be children embracing the baptism of the Spirit. The content is not as cogent as it could be, although the vocabulary certainly is simple to read.

The main thrust of the book is to contrast John’s baptism of water with the Baptism of the Spirit, and it argues that the former is done away with in favor of the latter, citing John the Baptist’s word to that effect. However, is that what the text of Scripture teaches? With this, let us look into the book in greater detail.

### **Positives**

King teaches that we are to rely on the Holy Spirit and the Word. In chapter four, in page 20, he said that “in defeating the devil, one needs to know the truth; that is having a weapon—the Word of God is the weapon.” In page 22, we are told to be led by the Holy Spirit as completely as possible is through the Baptism of the Spirit. King’s teaching that we are to rely on the Holy Spirit and the Word is commendable.

Similarly, it is commendable that King places a high premium on being led by the Spirit over against education (but see below). King attempts to be biblical in whatever he says.

### **An examination of the main argument:**

King’s main argument is that John’s baptism is temporary and that he predicts the end of his ministry of baptism. Jesus’ baptism is the Baptism of the Spirit which is with us today. King calls us to focus on this Baptism of the Spirit as something that Christians are called to and should experience.

A key problem here is that King does not get around to truly define what the “Baptism of the Spirit” is. One can infer that it is possibly identical with the traditional Pentecostal definition of having an ecstatic experience with the initial experience of speaking in tongues, as King simply cites the verses which speak about speaking in tongues without much comment.

King believes that the “Baptism of the Spirit” is an experience subsequent upon conversion. For example, in page 27, King states that the filling of the Holy Spirit “is a gift that follows obeying or keeping commandments when one has had and believed the Gospel,” citing Acts 10: 34-46 and Jn. 14:15-16 as proof-texts. Elsewhere at the end of the book (pp. 71-2), King wrote an invitation whereby he gave steps for people who want to receive the baptism of the Spirit now to follow.

Such a doctrine of course is classic Pentecostal teaching, which is not surprising since King is an Assemblies of God pastor. The problem here however is that this Pentecostal distinctive is not truly biblical at all.

The history of God’s redemption or the *historia salutis* (history of salvation) is how God works out His salvation in time. Another term, the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation), refers to how God works His salvation in people. The two of them are naturally different from each other. For example, the Holy Spirit by virtue of Christ’s presence cannot come down in power (Jn. 16:7) although Jesus’ disciples (excepting Judas) believed in Jesus. So therefore, the fact that Pentecost follows subsequent after the faith of Jesus’ disciples says nothing about the situation now. As a counterpoint to the idea that faith necessarily precedes Spirit baptism, we can look at the cases of Balaam and Saul, both who were filled with the Spirit at various times yet were unregenerate unbelievers.

Since such is the case, the primary approach by King is basically making the *historia salutis* normative, which is a hermeneutical error. In speaking of the Baptism of the Spirit in page 64, King utilizes Mk. 16:17-18, which is extremely problematic since early manuscripts do not have the ending of Mark. Whatever one’s position is on the Markan ending, and whether it is original

to the text, that it does not seem to be authentic means that no doctrine should be based upon the disputed passage at the very least.

Back to the topic of John's baptism with water versus Jesus' baptism of the Spirit, King looked at Jn. 1:29-34 and said that when John contrasted his baptizing with water with Jesus' baptism with the Spirit, John was declaring the end of his ministry, as a shadow to the real (p. 49). King then cites Jn. 4:2 to show that Jesus was focused on Spirit baptism as water baptism is now over (p. 57).

The problem comes however when we notice that the contrast in Jn. 1:33 does not say that water baptism is no longer in use. It merely says that Jesus' act of baptizing will be done differently than how John the Baptist did it. We notice here that Jesus' disciples baptized with water, as did the apostles and the church in Acts. Therefore, King is wrong in claiming that water baptism is no longer important. On John 4:2, that Jesus was not personally involved with baptism is a mere narrative fact which does not mean that Jesus denigrated water baptism as He was focused on Spirit baptism. According to Pentecostalism, the Holy Spirit first came to baptize people in the Spirit only at Pentecost. In this light, Jesus was not involved in Spirit baptism until after His ascension. Acts 2: 41 shows us that water baptism immediately came about after Spirit-baptism, which falsifies the dichotomy postulated by King. Furthermore, the baptism in Acts 2 was attended with the call to repent for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38), which suggests that apostolic baptism has to do with repentance too.

King next made the following statement to contrast the two baptisms:

The difference between the baptism of water and of the Holy Spirit is actually based on creed/belief. Those who were baptized by water during John's time were moved by repentance, not necessarily believing in Jesus because He (Jesus) was yet to start working. However, those who are baptized with the Holy Spirit must believe in Jesus as the Son of the living God. (p. 57)

The Scriptures however make no such claim. Of course, those baptized by John, as were all Old Testament believers in God, did not know the name "Jesus." But Old Testament saints do believe in the Gospel as expressed in a seed form, such that the Gospel was said to be pre-preached (*προεσηγγελίσατο*) to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). Abraham saw the times of Christ by faith, and was glad (Jn. 8:56). Also, repentance and faith are merely two sides of the same coin, as when Peter called on the Jews to repent and be baptized in Acts 2:38. Are we supposed to believe that Peter did not call them to faith in Christ in his first sermon at Pentecost? I would think not.

The biblical teaching is that Spirit baptism is the reality that lies behind the sacrament of water baptism, just as spiritual (or heart) circumcision lies behind the reality behind the Old Testament sacrament of flesh circumcision (Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Col. 2: 11-12). One is the reality, the other the sacramental sign. Apart from Spirit baptism, no one can believe in Christ.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> This is not the place to flesh this out fully. The reason why this is so is because nobody can believe in Christ unless the Spirit works faith in his heart. This theological doctrine is called monergism, and one

command in Scripture to be filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:18 is in the present tense, which denote a command to be continually filled with the Spirit, living in the Spirit day by day as it were.

King's concern is for people to live the Spirit-filled life. That is of course commendable. However, the Scriptures teach that true believers are already Spirit-filled. Those who manifest error and wrong fruit should question their salvation, not whether they are lacking the Spirit. Those who are saved are indeed gifted by the Spirit in various ways (1 Cor. 12:7, 12), but it is erroneous to demand that the Spirit must give certain gifts like tongues to all believers, something which is contradicted explicitly in Scripture itself (1 Cor. 12:30). The Spirit gives gifts as He wishes to for the building up of Christ's kingdom, not according to what we think make us look spiritual.

### **Gospel and Obedience**

A major concern here is the presentation of the Gospel and its relation to obedience. While we agree that Jesus has come and that faith does not depend on efforts by Man to please God, the Gospel presentation is overall deficient.

For example, King mentioned that "In the true sense, believing is different from faith. Nevertheless, they relate though they are not the same" (pp. 42-3). This of course disregards that both faith (πίστις) and believe (πιστεύω) have the same root in Greek (the "πιστ-" root). The act of belief is simply faith. King's subsequent contrast of "believe" and "faith" basically reduces "believe" to mere assent (*assentia*) without trust (*fiducia*), while expanding faith to faithfulness.<sup>2</sup> This is not in line with English language usage of the terms, and neither is it congruent with Scripture where those with faith believe, and those who believe have faith. Faith and faithfulness are also different. One is the act of faith, while the other is the fruit of faith (faith applied).

With the confusion of faith with faithfulness, King connects faith with commands in page 46, listing down a number of actions like loving your wife/ husband. While certainly Christians are to obey God's commands, they do so as actions of gratitude because they already have faith, not that such obedience is actually faith, a teaching which is moralism.

On page 43, King also states such:

If you forgive, they will be forgiven, and if you repent on their behalf, they will be forgiven, if you open salvation for them, they will believe.

This is situated in the context of intercession. Nevertheless, even in intercession, we do not forgive people as if we were God who forgives, neither do we "repent on their behalf." Repentance and faith is a personal matter between a person and God, and we cannot repent on other people's behalf. There is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5), not us.

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place where it is graphically taught is Ezek. 37:1-14. Also see Jn. 6:44, which says "No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

<sup>2</sup> King wrote "Faith is Fulfilling the Commandments" (p. 43)

## **Dominion theology**

Another issue of concern has to do with the promotion of Dominion theology. First of all, King is in error in making Gen. 1 as an event temporally before the events of Gen. 2 (p. 13). Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are not two events, whereby Gen. 1:26 speaks about God's intention to and not action of making Man. Rather, Gen. 1:1-2:3 is the summary view of Creation ("these are the generations..." in Gen. 2:4), while the text of Genesis 2 from verse 4 onwards focuses on the details of the creation of Man himself.

On page 13, King states that the mandate in Gen. 1:26 teaches that "it is a command for the people of God to have dominion over all other creatures... both in the physical and spiritual realms" and that "He [God] wanted us to keep this ruling habit on His behalf" (pp. 14-15). What this dominions looks like is seen in the delineation of dominion over "the environment," "the air, plants, productive activities— socially, economically, and politically" (p. 16), and "to become a dominion and rulers of the environment in this world while at the same time inheriting the Kingdom of God here in this world and during rapture" (pp. 30-31).

While this is a complicated subject to deal with, in brief, Scripture indeed teaches that Man was created to have dominion over all things. Firstly however, the dominion is over all of Creation, but not over other men. Secondly, Man through the Fall is corrupted and is unable to exercise dominion as he should. Thirdly, the one who did fulfill the Creation Mandate is Jesus Christ who is the Second Adam. From this, we see that Jesus did not ask us and commission us to continue on with a Christianized Cultural Mandate, although that is still the lot of all of humanity imperfect as we are, but the focus of the Church is the Great Commission. The Church is not called to be the second Adam. Rather, as humans, we continue with non-believers to work on the Creation Mandate. As Christians called out by Christ however, our focus is not on cultural renewal.

The call to dominion therefore is not biblical, and fundamentally distracts the Church from her Great Commission. Christians are indeed to be salt and light in the world and thus work for the fulfillment of the Cultural Mandate in the secular (i.e. this-worldly) enterprise. However, such is done not as a distinct Christian enterprise but as a common grace enterprise.

## **Education and Spirit Baptism**

As mentioned above, it is commendable that King emphasized the leading of the Spirit over education. Yet, the question to be asked is: Why the dichotomy? Does the Spirit work in some immediate, mystical fashion? Does not the Spirit also work mediately through education?

On a similar note, King pits "the whims of churches and denominations versus the Word of God" (p. 29). Again, this is a false dichotomy. No doubt some churches and denominations may have whims which are contrary to the Word of God. But is it always the case that certain rulings and judgments of churches and denominations are against the Word of God? Such polemic is stacking the deck so as to give oneself the moral high ground as if one's own teaching regarding things like the Baptism of the Spirit is not similarly a teaching or ruling that is just as much an interpretation of the Word of God as certain rulings and judgments of churches and

denominations. The key issue here is not merely asserting that one's teaching is spiritual and others are just "whims," but rather to argue that one's view is indeed biblical and to show why one's opponent's view is not.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we have examined King's teachings according to Scripture. King's desire for people to be filled with the Holy Spirit and his emphasis on the Word are commendable. The Gospel however needs to be better formulated and any hints of moralism removed. King's main case has not been found to be congruent with the teachings of Scripture, while his dominion theology is similarly not found in the Scriptures.