

“Please Baptize Me With Fire!”

By Tony Melton

Some sincere religious folks pray to God asking Him to baptize them with fire. They base this request upon the words of John the Baptist. John proclaims: *“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.*

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” (Matthew 3:11,12).

In these passages, John addresses two types of people. The penitent who had come to John’s baptism confessing their sins, and the Pharisees and Sadducees whom John calls a “Brood of vipers.” John tells this mixed group that Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The promise of the Holy Spirit baptism was fulfilled in Acts two and ten. But, what about the baptism in fire?

John says that the wheat (righteous) will be gathered, but the chaff (unrighteous) will be burned (baptized) with “unquenchable fire.” The Bible says that Jesus will come again *“in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Jesus teaches the same concept in the parable of the wheat and the tares (weeds) (Matthew 13:18-43). In this parable, Jesus says that the wheat and the tares grow together in the field, which represents the world. He explains that the wheat represents the righteous and the tares the unrighteous. Then Jesus says: “. . . *the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who*

practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 3:39-42).

To me, it seems like a tragic mistake to pray for the baptism of fire. The teachings of John and Jesus both have reference to the great day of Judgment when God will separate the good from the evil. On that day, the righteous will go into eternal life, but the unrighteous into everlasting fire; they will be baptized with fire. (Matthew 3:41, 46).