



What Is the Baptism of Fire? Is It Good or Bad?

Many teachings as well as songs imply that the baptism of fire is a good thing. After reading John the Baptist's comments, I've just recently considered that it may be a bad thing, and would like to know what you think as well.

1) Fire always symbolizes punishment/condemnation in the gospels.

If you do a word search for "fire" in the gospels, it always refers to Hell (except for the epileptic boy who would fall into fire {Matt 17:15}, when Peter was warming himself over the fire when he denied Jesus {Mark 14:54}, and the fish that was cooked over the fire {John 21:9}).

2) John the Baptist is the only person to mention a baptism of fire.

It is only recorded in 2 places: Matthew 3:7-12 and Luke 3:7-17. John mentions fire 3 times: in the 3rd chapter of Matthew, verses 10, 11, and 12, or in the 3rd chapter of Luke, verses 9, 16, and 17.

3) Jewish teachings are repeated for context

Jewish teachings and idioms often repeat 1 idea 2 or 3 times in different ways so that people could have better understanding of what they were trying to express. In both Matthew & Luke John's exact same words about fire are spoken in the same order; punishment, punishment, punishment.

John on Reward & Punishment in Matthew 3:7-12

John was preaching 2 ideas together in 3 examples:

1) Reward for the fruitful, repentant, and obedient, with salvation, to become Children of the kingdom, and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to be in heaven with God (stored in the barn).

2) Punishment for the unfruitful, unrepentant, disobedient, who will be punished with fire, which are the Children of the wicked one, and will receive baptism of fire, which is unquenchable fire (in Hell).

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

[Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance] – The reward for those who repent is that they will be baptized with the Holy Ghost (Matt 3:11) and stored in the garner/barn (Matt 3:12) because they are the Children of the kingdom (Matt 13:38).

[every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire] – The punishment for not repenting. See the pattern: reward, punishment, reward, punishment. This is the 1st mention of fire, which is punishment.



11 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:

[I indeed baptize you with water] – Literally, the people were submerged into REAL water. They did not just have a wet watery feeling come over them as those who claim to have been baptized with fire had a “fiery” feeling come over them. Those baptized with fire will literally be submerged in REAL fire. If you get wet by the baptism of water, you’d get burned by the baptism of fire.

[he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost] – This happened in Acts 2:4, called “filled with the Holy Ghost”. When John said this, he wasn’t talking to everyone, just to the people who had repented and “brought forth fruits meet for repentance”. This is the reward for everyone who obeys God.

[and with fire] – This is the punishment for whoever sits around like rocks and says, “I don’t need to do anything to be justified, I’m righteous just because I’m a descendant of Abraham”. Do you think the people listening to John considered getting baptized in fire a good thing? He already mentioned fire once in reference to Hell (Matt 3:10). After this he refers to fire again in reference to Hell (Matt 3:12). Does the context point at this fire being a good thing? How are people baptized/submerged with fire? Whoever’s name is not written in the Book of Life is thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:15). THAT will be a literal baptism in fire that people WILL actually be submerged in. 2nd mention of punishment.

12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

[fan] – G4425 = winnowing fan/shovel, used to toss wheat in the air to separate the husk from wheat.

[purge his floor] – To judge the world (Acts 17:31)

[his wheat] – Same as the wheat from Matt 13:24-30; Children of the kingdom (Matt 13:38).

[the chaff] – Same as the tares from Matt 13:24-30; Children of the wicked one (Matt 13:38).

[unquenchable fire] – Punishment in Hell (Mark 9:43). 3rd mention of punishment.

What I Thought Might Be the Baptism of Fire

These verses aren’t as convincing to me as the argument above, but here’s all of the verses that I thought might have been associated with the baptism of fire, at least in the past:

Acts 2:3 – the “tongues of fire” that appeared at the “baptism of the Holy Ghost”

1Corinthians 3: 13 – “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. 14 If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

Hebrews 12: 29 – “For our God is a consuming fire”

1Peter 1: 7 – “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”

1Peter 4:12 – “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:”