

Why Am I Burning?

By Craig Cooper

Ahhhhh! I feel like I am in the middle of a rope being pulled in two different directions by two different strongmen. What is this tug of war going on inside of me? If the pressure doesn't let up I am going to be torn in two. Guess what? If the pressure doesn't let up you will be torn in two.

I can hear you saying right now, "Craig, you are so encouraging, I am so glad that I am letting you input into my life spiritually." Well, thank you!

Let me encourage you with this statement, God will not let you be pulled apart — You only think you will.

Do you remember the passage in *James 1:2-4* that talks about how trials will make you *mature* and *complete* (NIV)? It might be a good time to go back and re-read it. This is the tug of war. Let me explain.

"Mature" means perfect in labor, mental, and moral character. "Complete" means perfectly sound in your whole body. One of the strongmen pulling on the rope is the Spirit of God. The other strongman is your mind. You are literally in a fight for your life to see who will control you by pulling you to their side.

You may be saying again, "Craig, I know that principle, but why is it so intense now?" Good question. It is because the third baptism that the Godhead has for us is starting to come into full speed.

Third baptism? I have only heard of two. Each of the Godhead has a baptism that they want to release on the earth. The purpose of these baptisms is to make a bride for Jesus. All that God has done in the history of His people is to bring them to a place of where they could be a worthy and suitable bride for His Son Jesus.

Father God, is going to give away a bride to His Son just like Fathers give away their daughters in marriage today. Father God is not going to give away any second hand gifts. He is only going to give away a gift or a bride that is worthy to be called His daughter-in-law. That bride is you and I along with everyone else saved.

In many cultures today, the Fathers still pick out the brides for their sons. In these cultures every good father is going to have to do three things to get a bride ready for their son:

Ask a girl to say yes to be his future daughter-in-law. Of course, he wouldn't just ask anyone, but someone that he knew who would have great potential.

Give the girl the tools and resources to reach her full potential and be successful as a bride and future wife. This could mean training, money, authority, etc.

Examine, test, and train her character, motivations, intentions to insure that she has a heart for his son. He does not want a self-centered girl. He realizes this does not make for a good marriage.

These are the same things that the Father God is doing for His Son Jesus. *Ephesians 5:21-33* spells out how believers are the church and wife of Jesus.

Each person of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—have taken responsibility for one of the steps to prepare us as a bride for Jesus. There are three major steps or the Bible calls them baptisms.

Luke 3:16 (NIV) John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. I [1]But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit [2] and with fire [3]."

The first baptism is the baptism of water. This was symbolized by John the Baptist. It is a baptism of

repentance. It is saying in effect, yes I want to be linked with Jesus. I want to be saved and to be His bride. Jesus enabled this baptism by paying for our sins on the Cross. Because of His death we now have the opportunity of becoming His bride.

Matthew 3:1,2,6 (NIV) ¹In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea ²and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."...⁶Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

When we get saved and baptized we have entered into the first step in the eyes of the Father of becoming a bride for His Son. The results of this first baptism is fruit of a changed allegiance to your future bridegroom.

The second baptism or major step is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit and is called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This second work of the Godhead came upon the first believers 50 days after Jesus left the earth on the Jewish day called Pentecost.

Acts 1:7-8 (NIV) ⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 2:1,4 (NIV) ¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.....⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit gives us the resources to carry out our jobs as Jesus' wife. It gives us power, gifts and fruits to do what we need to do.

The final step is purifying, pruning, and processing the Bride's motivations and intentions. The Father is carrying out this job through the Baptism of Fire.

1 Peter 4:12 (NASB) ¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

Hebrews 12:26-29 (NIV) ²⁶At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹for our "God is a consuming fire."

God is setting us on fire to produce a good work in us!

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 (KJV) ¹³Every 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. ¹⁴If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Remember Gideon's army that demolished the enemy. We all want to be a part of that army. Do you remember how it went through two "cuts" before the final number of people were chosen by God. We are going through tests and fiery trials now to become a part of that final army who will also be a beautiful righteous bride.

Zechariah 13:9 (NIV) ⁹This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

This is our tug of war. The results of the Baptism of Fire is Holiness. The Father is "pulling" out of us

motivations, intentions, and emotions that keep us from right living in the family with Jesus as our Husband.

Even Jesus went through these three baptisms.

Matthew 3:16 (NIV) ¹⁶As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. [baptism of water] At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him [baptism of Holy Spirit]. Matthew 4:1 (NIV) Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil [baptism of fire].

The Father deals with us as individuals but He also deals with us as a group of believers. We lost many biblical truths when the church went into the dark ages starting in the 4th century.

When Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity the State Religion and built the first “Christian” buildings in 327 AD the church lost its relationship with God and became a religion. It was not an overnight change but it did cause a major shift in the direction of Christianity.

Before this time, there were no “Christian” buildings. There were no hierarchal organizations of leaders. The people worshipped in simplicity led by the five-fold ministers working together as a team (*Ephesians 4:11*).

Constantine brought into the church many practices that shifted the focus from one of Jesus to one of ritual. Even the buildings themselves were modeled after the Roman judicial courts and the pagan temples. The concept of priest was introduced because pagan religions had them. Before this time Hebrews tells us everyone was considered a priest with Jesus being our high priest.

God’s heart broke as Christianity moved from freedom to bondage, salvation by grace to salvation by buying indulgences, worshipping Jesus to worshipping saints, being a dynamic body with Jesus as the head to a religious organization. This period lasted from approximately 300 AD to 1500 AD. For 1200 years the church lost all contact with what it was, why it was here, and who it was here for. It was so dark that historians now call it the Dark Ages.

But the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—had a plan. That plan involved birthing (or should I say rebirthing) truths by each member of the Godhead into believers. There have been many moves of God. But there have been three major moves representing one person of the Godhead. Each of these major moves have been followed by minor moves reinforcing the major move. You could think of each major move as a large earthquake followed by smaller tremors.

Since the Dark Ages the Father has been helping the church rediscover His plans, ways, and purposes. During the last 500 years starting with the Protestant Reformation the truths and experiences of the first two baptisms has been largely restored to the church. The third baptism of fire has not been widely experienced by the Body of Christ until now. This baptism is now being unleashed upon the Body by the Father Himself to finish the job the first two baptisms started.

That is why you are feeling a tug of war between your mind and spirit like never before. We will soon see that this is a great time to be alive when we see the results.

Here is a chart that will give an overview of the three baptisms.

<u>BAPTISM</u>	<u>PRODUCES</u>	<u>FROM</u>
1. Water	Turned Heart (Repentance) Evidenced by Fruit	Jesus
2. Holy Spirit	Power	Holy Spirit

James 1:2-4 talks about how trials will make us *mature* and *complete* (NIV) us. The Father is “pulling” out of us motivations, intentions, and emotions that keep us from being a worthy bride.

Each of the steps that a good Father does in looking for a bride for his son are also being done by our Heavenly Father for His Son Jesus. These three steps are represented by the three baptisms. These are what the Father God is taking his Son’s bride through.

Luke 3:16 (NIV) John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. I [1]But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit [2] and with fire [3].

On October 31, 1517, the first baptism—the baptism of water—was released back into the earth in an earth shaking way. This baptism was to bring people to repentance and turn their hearts to Jesus. Before this day people did not even understand how to reach God. They were told so many “religious” lies and deception was so dark over the people that a concept of a relationship with Jesus was foreign.

What happened on that day? Martin Luther, a Roman Catholic Priest, nailed a written document containing 95 truths to the door of a chapel in Germany. These 95 truths challenged the “status quo” maintained by the Religious Spirit of the day. Space will not allow much detail of this time period, but here are the major truths God restored back into His church.

- Saved by Faith Alone
- You Can Approach God directly. There is no need for a priest as a mediator.
- Authority of the Word of God and the right of each Believer to read it.

These truths seem so basic to us today. But these were revolutionary truths 500 years ago that started the restoration of the Church to be Jesus’ bride. These truths were so radical that they caused literal wars and the followers were called “protestors” resulting in the name

“Protestant Reformation”. The truths so changed people’s hearts back to God that it was not called a revival but a reformation. Besides men’s hearts being changed, change came to all areas of life on the earth—civil, family, marriage, etc. The first baptism—one of repentance that would produce fruit and change in people was birthed into the earth to willing men.

It took approximately 400 years for these truths to be understood, assimilated, and incorporated into the lives of believers. There were many tremors that took the “earthquake” into full truth. One of the biggest was the Holiness movement that gained full momentum around 1800 and was the strongest in the Methodist church led by John Wesley. At the heart of this movement was an emphasis on the presence of the Lord inside of us and how that was to be used to turn us towards holiness.

But the second “earthquake”/baptism/major truth was released on December 31, 1900 in Topeka, Kansas. At the Charles Parham Bible School the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was poured out on all of the students. But the real pouring out across the world happened in 1906 with a Black Holiness preacher named William Seymour in an old building on Azusa Street in Los Angeles. There is much we could talk about, but you probably know most of what happened.

God through the Pentecostal movement, and the other tremor movements know as the Latter Rain, Charismatic, Word of Faith movements birthed much truth. The major truths restored were: the gifts of the

Holy Spirit, Enthusiastic Worship, Dancing, Deliverance, Ministry of the Believer, etc.

This movement gave the newly (400 years old, 1500-1900) found bride the tools, power, and resources to become a beautiful bride! But the job was not yet complete—step 3—purification was to come.

The Charismatic movement—last movement of the 2nd Baptism—started in 1960. I believe it ended in the year 2000. The number 40 often means one of deliverance to a new thing.

I believe the final baptism poured out by the Father Himself —the baptism of fire—started in 2001. There are many things the Father is purifying us from and truths He is restoring us back to. But the most important thing He is restoring is a desire for intimacy with Jesus as the Bridegroom. What quality would a marriage be if the Bride did not get married with great expectation and excitement.

Revelation 3:20 (NIV) ²⁰Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

This process of refinement to become Jesus' bride is just starting. It is a hard process and a deep work. But we will come out with some gold and silver in our character to present to our future husband Jesus. As we learn more about the ramifications of this baptism we will see that it will cause as many changes in the church as the Protestant Reformation and the Pentecostal movement did.

Are you on fire yet? I hope so—because a beautiful bride is coming forth from the fire!