

Baptized in the Spirit

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1843-1914

*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: -- **Matthew 3:11***

I have myself heard one and the same person use seriously every one of the following expressions:

1. "Oh, I have received the Spirit baptism, and that is the main thing."
2. "Whatever may be said of the mode of water baptism, it is certain the Spirit baptism was by pouring."
3. "O Lord, baptize us in the Holy Ghost and in fire."
4. "The Spirit baptism is but another name for regeneration or conversion, as proved from the Scriptures, **Ephesians 4:5: 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism.'** And from **I Corinthians 12:13: '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.'**"

I say that I have heard one person use all four of these expressions. Now listen to an analysis of them. Judging from the conditions and circumstances when these expressions were used, fairly analyzed, they mean as follows:

First expression analyzed: There are now in the world two baptisms, by authority of Jesus Christ: Spirit baptism, the greater; water baptism, the less. If you receive the first it exempts you from any special obligation as to the second. I say that is what that first expression means when analyzed. "Oh, we have received the Spirit baptism, which is the main thing." Analyze that expression and it means that if you have received the greater, the other is a matter of so small importance that there is no special obligation with reference to it.

Second expression analyzed: As the Spirit baptism, the greater, was by pouring, therefore the water baptism could not be an immersion. That is unquestionably a fair analysis of the second expression.

Third Expression analyzed: The Spirit baptism comes in answer to prayer. Christians should pray for it. Spirit baptism and fire mean the same thing. The expression you remember was this: "O Lord, baptize us in the Holy Ghost and in fire." That is a prayer. I say that when that expression is analyzed it means first, that the Spirit baptism comes in answer to prayer, and second, that Christians should pray for it; and third, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost and baptism in fire mean the same thing.

Fourth expression analyzed: As the Spirit baptism means regeneration or conversion, therefore all Christians have already received it, since one cannot be a Christian without regeneration or conversion, and as there is only one baptism, by the Scripture quoted, it cannot be received again by the same person. Hence, Christians may not pray for the baptism of the Spirit. Moreover, as there is only one baptism, and that is Spirit baptism, therefore water baptism is no baptism, and is not obligatory. That is a fair analysis of the fourth expression. The last expression flatly contradicts the

first and the third, and the second abuses etymology, rhetoric, and logic and yet the one who said these four things devoutly and religiously held to them all.

I would not deem these four expressions worthy of serious notice in a sermon if they were only the past expressions of one man; but as they are the stereotyped and present expressions of a multitude, as they are proverbs and catchwords of today, more potent with many than any argument or any Scripture in swaying human conduct, it may not be amiss to consider them somewhat in this sermon.

I repeat that these four expressions, which I have analyzed, and which are contradictory, and which abuse etymology, rhetoric, and logic, and which are palpably contrary to many Scriptures, these four expressions are stereotyped and are the present utterances of a multitude. They are proverbs and catchwords of power with many in swaying human conduct, and they do four hurtful things.

They set aside the action of water baptism and depreciate it.

They confound the Spirit baptism with conversion.

They confound it with sanctification.

They nullify the teachings of the Bible with reference to eternal punishment.

By way of introduction I want to propound to your consciences certain questions.

First question: The New Testament speaks of a baptism in water and of a

baptism in the Spirit. In which connection is the word baptism used in a literal sense and in which one is it used in a figurative sense? I put it upon your consciences to answer that question. Is the baptism in the Spirit the literal baptism, and the baptism in the water the figurative, or vice versa?

Second question: Is there any command in the New Testament imposing on you the obligation to be baptized in water?

Third question Is Spirit baptism or water baptism designated and required in the following Scriptures?

"They ... were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:5). Is that water baptism or Spirit baptism?

"After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came and were baptized" (John 3:22, 23) Is that Spirit baptism or water baptism?

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). Does that require water baptism or Spirit baptism?

"And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:29, 30).

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ ... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:38, 41).

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

"See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ... "And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip" (Acts 8:36, 38, 39).

"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:47).

"We went out of the city by a river side, ... and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And ... Lydia attended unto the things spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized," etc. (Acts 16:13-15).

"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway" (Acts 16:32, 33).

"And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized"(Acts 18:8).

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized"(Acts 22:16).

My question is, do these Scriptures which I have just read, designate and require water baptism or Spirit baptism? Which one? Is the baptism in these Scriptures a literal one or a figurative? Do these Scriptures obligate you to water baptism?

Fourth question: I ask you to listen to it. In trying to understand your duty concerning water baptism ought you to study what is said in the New Testament about water baptism or about Spirit baptism? I want to repeat and emphasize that question. In trying to understand your duty about water baptism ought you to study what is said in the New Testament about water baptism, or ought you to study what is said about Spirit baptism?

Fifth question: Is there a command in the New Testament which imposes the obligation of Spirit baptism on you? If so, where? Will you quote it?

Sixth question: Granting such a command, does it exempt you from the necessity of obedience to plain and positive commands to submit to water baptism?

Seventh question: Because something is said in the New Testament about the Spirit baptism, using the word in a figurative sense, ought you to

shun, avoid, neglect, or depreciate a positive and unequivocal command expressed in a literal sense of the word?

Now, following these expressions which I have quoted, and these questions which have been propounded, I will take the text, "***I indeed baptize you in water; ... but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost.***" (Matthew 3:11)

This text is a contrast throughout. There is a contrast between two baptizers, John and Jesus. Jesus is mightier than John, in the purity of His character, by so much as an immaculate one is superior to a sinful one; in the power which He holds, in so much as omnipotence transcends temporary, limited, and derived power; in the dignity of His character and of His office, by so much as all authority in Heaven and on earth surpasses a brief earthly commission; and in His ministry by so much as that one was to decrease and cease and the other to increase and endure "***always, even unto the end of the world.***"

There stood the two baptizers; and of the one it is said that he was as great as any man ever born of a woman; and hence it is not instituting a comparison between an insignificant man on the one hand and a greater man on the other, but it is instituting a comparison between the greatest man and a Being infinitely greater than the greatest man. Hence, it unequivocally teaches the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as to His immaculate nature, as to His omnipotent power, as to His investment with all authority, and as to the perpetuity of His kingdom.

The second point of contrast is in the baptism. "***I indeed baptize you in***

water." "He will baptize you in the Holy Ghost." Here are two elements which stand over against each other as the two baptizers stood over against each other. One element is water; the other element is the Holy Ghost.

There is not only a contrast between the baptizers and the baptism, the element, but there is a contrast in the subjects. John baptized in water only penitent believers, men who had repented of their sins, men who had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus baptizes in the Holy Ghost some Christians, and in fire all sinners.

There is also a contrast in the design of the two baptisms. John baptized in water penitent believers who in that ordinance, visibly and before men, confessed their allegiance to Jesus Christ, and showed forth His burial and resurrection. The design of the baptism of the Holy Ghost was to confer power on Christians, whether they had been baptized in water or not, as you will see directly.

Thus, between the baptizers and the elements in which they baptized and the subjects they baptized, and the design of the baptism, they stood over against each other in contrast, and the essential feature of the contrast was power. Power! John said to these Pharisees and Sadducees who came to this baptism. *"I cannot baptize you. You do not repent. You do not bring forth fruits meet for repentance. I announce to you that the ax is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. But I cannot take that ax and cut down the trees, I can not make that discrimination. I cannot separate between the righteous and the unrighteous: but there cometh one after me mightier than I. He can and He will."* And I ask you to notice in the next place that neither of these baptisms supersede or displace the other. You could not plead an exemption

from the water baptism because you had received the other. Each one stood upon its own merits.

Now I want to show you in the next place what the baptism of the Holy Ghost is not. I want to discuss it negatively.

In the first place, it is not conversion for the following reasons:

In conversion the Spirit of God is the agent or administrator; but in the baptism of the Spirit the Spirit of God is the element, and Jesus is the agent or administrator. Jesus will baptize you in the Holy Ghost; as the water was the element in which John baptized penitent believers, so the Spirit was the element in which Jesus baptized those who received the baptism of the Spirit. But in conversion the Holy Ghost is the direct agent, the direct administrator. He originates, He acts, He confers, and this is the first point of distinction

In the second place, the subjects of the Spirit baptism and the subjects of regeneration are totally different. The subject of regeneration is a sinner, a lost sinner. The subject of the Spirit baptism is a Christian, one who is already regenerated and converted. There is not a man living who can show one instance where a sinner received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Let me elaborate that before I leave it. Take the second chapter of the Acts, where it is said that the Christian people being assembled together in one place, on these Christian people came the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Jesus had said unto his disciples: "**Tarry ye in Jerusalem until I send to you the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me.**" And at the close of that sermon Peter makes faith in Jesus Christ the condition of receiving that Spirit baptism; as Paul does, when he says to those disciples whom he met

at Ephesus, Have you received the baptism of the Holy Ghost since you believed, or did you receive it when you believed?

Take the next instance. In the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Philip preached in Samaria, and it is said that "***When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized***" in water, but as yet the Holy Ghost had fallen on none of them. The apostles came down and prayed that they might receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and these penitent believers, these baptized Christians, received it.

Take the case in the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, when Cornelius and his household received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The disciples to whom the matter was rehearsed, argued from it that they must have previously repented unto life and had their faith purified by Christ, as you will find from the eleventh and fifteenth chapters of the Acts. Suppose I was to see that a certain thing comes only to a certain character, and I see that that certain thing is possessed by a certain man. I then argue from this effect that the previous conditions must have existed in this case. So they said, when it was reported to them that Cornelius the Gentile had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Then hath God granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life, purifying their hearts by faith. Concerning the Samaritans it is taught expressly that they received that baptism after they believed.

The Spirit baptism is not conversion, for this reason, which every child can remember: No man living, certainly not at least in any book I have ever read or in any speech I have ever heard, affirms that there ever was in the history of the world, a baptism in the Holy Ghost until the first Pentecost after Christ ascended into Heaven. In the history of the world that is the first

time that there ever was a baptism in the Spirit. If so, was nobody ever converted until that time? Was not Abel a Christian? Was not Enoch? Was not Noah? Was not Elijah, who went up to Heaven in a chariot of fire? Were not the apostles, who had themselves been baptized in water and who had been sent out as baptizers? Do you mean to say that the world was four thousand years old before any soul was ever converted? And yet, whoever teaches that the baptism in the Spirit is regeneration or conversion, denies that any soul was saved, even during Christ's lifetime, or John the Baptist's, or in the time of the prophets, or from the days of the garden of Eden until the first Pentecost, after the ascension, which is not only monstrous in itself, but which palpably contradicts the whole of the Bible.

In the next place, Jesus said at Caesarea Philippi, "***On this rock will I build my church,***" referring to Himself and the faith which Peter had expressed in Him. Now, will you affirm that He built His church upon a foundation that existed prior to salvation, prior to conversion? The design of regeneration and of the Spirit baptism are widely different. The object of regeneration is to make a sinner a Christian. The object of the Spirit baptism is to make a Christian more efficient; to confer power on him.

Now, the next point negatively, the Spirit baptism is not sanctification. To say that it is sanctification you have to affirm that no man ever received sanctification until after that day; that Enoch was not sanctified, nor Elijah, nor Abraham, contrary to the express declarations of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the apostles. In the next place, in sanctification the Holy Spirit is the direct administrator or agent, and in the Spirit baptism the Spirit is the element and Christ is the direct agent. The design of sanctification and of the Spirit baptism is widely different. It is the object of sanctification to make the subject of it a better man. It looks to his personal purification. The object of the Spirit baptism is to confer power upon the Christian, in order

that he may make other people better. It was not the design of the Spirit baptism to purify the man who received it, but it was the design of the baptism of the Spirit to confer power on him.

Third argument. In the first letter to the Corinthians, from the twelfth to the fourteenth chapters inclusive, we learn that many who had received the baptism of the Spirit were far from being sanctified. They were selfish, they were proud, they were magnifying these extra-ordinary powers which had been conferred upon them, and they were depreciating the graces of love and faith and hope which in their highest development constitute sanctification.

It is a pity that every Christian has not studied the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters of the first letter to the Corinthians. There in that church were men who possessed the gift of tongues, who could work miracles, who could interpret tongues, who could heal the sick; and yet they were exceedingly imperfect Christians who needed the sanctifying Spirit of God to make them purer and better, and to turn their thoughts away from mere power to grace in the heart.

My next argument is that sanctification is the heritage of every Christian, and that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not conferred upon every Christian, even in apostolic times, but only upon so many as God called to receive it; and in the second place, it had never been received by any one prior to Pentecost; and in the third place, it stopped altogether with that apostolic day. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be prophecies, they shall fail: but faith, hope, and charity, these abide forever. Now, having discussed the subject negatively, it is practically discussed affirmatively. What is the baptism of the Spirit? Let us go back and read the

first announcement in the prophecy of Joel, and while I read it you ask yourselves this: Is it conversion? Is it sanctification?

"And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." (Joel 2:28-29)

Now, here is Joel's reference to it. What then was it? The baptism in the Holy Ghost was this; laying aside all images it was this: The conferring upon such Christians in apostolic times as God might select, every variety of extra-ordinary miraculous power necessary to accredit them to men as His messengers, and to empower them to overcome all obstacles in the way of the propagation of the gospel. That is what it was. First, among the miraculous powers conferred was that of inspiration; otherwise, how would we get a canon of the New Testament? Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Only a man here and there in the long ages of the past was inspired.

Now it is said in the last days, after Jesus Christ ascends into Heaven, and is enthroned and invested with all power in Heaven and on earth, that He will inspire multitudes of men; instead of partial and occasional inspiration, it shall now be abundant enough to be called a baptism. He will endow multitudes of men with power to work miracles, and to heal the sick, and to speak in different languages. That is what it means. And with that view of the subject, it being a demonstration of the divinity of Jesus Christ, it being given for that special and temporal purpose, a purpose which had its limitation in time as well as in subject, is it not painful, absolutely painful, for men to take such a glorious doctrine as that, given for such a purpose, to

take it and wrest it out of its connection, and confound it with water baptism and conversion and sanctification? I do not know when, maybe it will be ten years before I shall have occasion to refer to this subject again, but I do want you Christian people to be instructed in the teaching of the word of God.

Now, I have only one other point before I make my last application. The baptism in the Spirit was a figurative baptism. I mean the word baptism is used in a figurative and not in a literal sense. If I refer to the Duke of Clarence, who was dipped in a hogshead of liquor until he was drowned, that is a literal baptism in wine or in ale. But if I say a man who has been drinking for six weeks, until he is saturated with ardent spirits, soaked in them, filled with them; if I say that man is baptized in wine, or baptized in whisky, that is a figurative use of the word. I do not mean that he has been literally immersed in whisky, but I mean that he is absolutely and altogether under its influence.

If I immerse one in a creek or baptistery, that is a literal baptism; but if I see a friend of mine in distress, in deep anxiety, groaning, sighing, weeping, full of pain, no ease, no peace, no hope, I say he is baptized in suffering. That is figurative. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ said, "***I have a baptism to be baptized in, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?***" I have sufferings to pass through so deep and overwhelming that you may compare the sufferings to an immersion in suffering. That is a figurative use of the word. If one dips another in a tank of oil, that is a literal baptism, a literal use of the word. But if it be one whose notes of hand are all over the community, whose property is all mortgaged, who has no realty that is not already encumbered, I say that man is baptized in debt; that is a figurative use of the word. He is overwhelmed in debt.

Now, when John the Baptist says, "***I baptize you in water***," that is a literal baptism, "***but Jesus will baptize you in the Holy Ghost***," that is a figurative use of the word. The Holy Ghost is not a liquid element, but you may use the word figuratively; when they are in the house, and the sound that indicates His presence fills that house, and they themselves are filled with the Spirit, permeated throughout by the indwelling Spirit of God, figuratively, you say that is a baptism in the Holy Ghost. That figurative use of the word is one of the commonest known to the Greek classics. I could cite you a hundred instances of it. So that the baptism in water, that is the literal; the other, that is the figurative. And because the literal is a burial, a sinking out of sight, so an overwhelming influence may figuratively be said to be a baptism in that influence.

Before we go away from here today I want to impress this upon you. You will hear, as I have heard ever since I was a child, such expressions as this: "Oh, I have received the Spirit baptism, which is the main thing." You may always question that statement and demand Scriptural proof. You may always question the conclusion designed to be drawn from the statement, which is, "I have received the Spirit baptism; therefore the other is unimportant."

You may also sometimes hear men pray, "Baptize us in the Holy Ghost." Be sure you understand what that means before you ever offer that prayer. Ask yourself this question: Why should I pray for it? Why should I wish to speak with tongues? Why should I wish to be invested with miraculous power? Why should I wish to have the power to heal the sick by word? Why should I? Those things were for a sign. They were to accredit the gospel. They were to close up and finish the book of Revelation. Now, do you want to write a new book of the Bible? If you do, it means that you think what is

here is not sufficient and it means that you take precisely the position of the spiritualists when they say: "We want a fresh gospel." Now, if you would not know what to do with this when you get it, if there is no reason why you should have it, if merely that you ask for it reflects upon the record which is here, then why should you ask for it?

God help you to study His book, to study it profoundly, to allow no floating proverb to set aside the plain "Thus saith the Lord." Oh, that men who bow to the name of Jesus Christ, would bow to the truth of Jesus Christ, and let Him be the Word as well as Saviour; let His word settle every question of Christianity; and that book, and that book only, be regarded as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Here is what you need, brethren and sisters. You need more love, more faith, more hope, more of the grace and less of the miraculous endowments of the past. You need submission to the Lord Jesus Christ as your King. You need to say: Jesus, whatever you tell me to do I will do it. I will not stand here and cavil at thy words; I will not try to shun them. I will not take one passage of God's word and try to sponge out another with it. Oh, for the spirit of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now, here is the last thing I have to say. It has been said that you make too much of baptism, you Baptists. Let me make this statement for you today: You are the only people called Christians on the face of the earth that require salvation before baptism. There are no others on the earth today who take that position. Instead of making baptism essential to salvation you are the only ones who demand in every case that its subjects must be saved before they are baptized. That is what you make of it. You bring the people to Christ first; salvation first, then baptism. Arm yourselves therefore with God's truth to fight lying proverbs. Decapitate them with the sword of the

Spirit. Explode one small charge of inspired dynamite under these sunken rocks and you will upheave them, making a safe passage to all unwary ships seeking the harbor of truth.

--(SERMONS AND LIFE SKETCH, 1893 Edition, pages 315-326).