

BAPTISM BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (33)

In Romans 6:1-5 it is clear that one of the key words connected to grace and salvation is “baptism.” Just reading these verses makes it clear that this baptism connected to grace totally and completely links us to the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The exact same point is made by Paul in Colossians 2:9-12. So it is clear that this is a key doctrinal word when it comes to grace.

Now the problem is that most people have no idea as to what this actually means. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes: “Since by the Spirit’s baptism the greatest transformations are wrought in behalf of the believer, it is expected that Satan, the enemy of God, will do all within his power to distract, misdirect, and confuse investigation respecting this specific ministry of the Holy Spirit” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 6, p. 138).

QUESTION #1 – What is Spirit Baptism?

Spirit baptism is the work of the Holy Spirit in which He places a believer into the actual family of God by permanently uniting and identifying the believer with Jesus Christ and everything He accomplished.

Spirit baptism so identifies the believer with Jesus Christ that he is literally joined together with Him in everything He is and everything He has done. Spirit baptism occurs at the precise moment one believes on Jesus Christ and it lasts forever.

At the very moment that one believes on Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit so unites the believer with Jesus Christ and all of His work that he is indissolubly identified and linked with Him forever. This is a true and accurate perspective and understanding of Spirit baptism.

QUESTION #2 – Why is there so much confusion on the subject of Spirit baptism?

There are at least six reasons why there is so much confusion on this topic:

Reason #1 - Because of the work of Satan.

What Dr. Chafer concluded is accurate, Satan is behind all confusion concerning this doctrine and concerning all true doctrine words. Satan never wants a believer to grasp the truth about the cemented union one has with Jesus Christ, when one believes. This one doctrine has the potential of causing a believer to have victory over sin and evil. Therefore, Satan desires to keep believers in total ignorance concerning the doctrine.

Reason #2 - Because of ignorance of dispensationalism.

Most people fail to realize that God works in different times in different ways. As a result, people become very confused about Spirit baptism in the Church Age. Many people read the word “baptism” and never stop to consider which baptism is being discussed.

As we move through the New Testament, there are at least fourteen different kinds of baptisms that are mentioned:

- 1) Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit - Matt. 3:11 - future reference to Pentecost (Acts 2).
- 2) Christ baptizes with fire - Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16 - future reference to Pentecost (Acts 2:3) and future reference to Christ's second coming with flaming judgment - II Thess. 1:7-9
- 3) Holy Spirit baptizing believers into the Body of Christ - I Cor. 12:13
- 4) Holy Spirit baptizing believers into the cross-work of Jesus Christ. Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:11-13
- 5) Christ's baptism into all of His sufferings connected with the cross. Luke 12:50
- 6) Noah's ark typological baptism which depicts Spirit baptism that saves us. I Pet. 3:20-21
- 7) Mosaic baptism of the children of Israel in the cloud and sea. I Cor. 10:2
- 8) Cultish water baptism in Corinth called "baptism for the dead." I Cor. 15:29
- 9) Jewish law baptisms that were ritualistic - Heb. 9:9-10 - the word "washings" is the word "baptisms" (baptismos).
- 10) Jewish baptisms or washings invented by men - Mark 7:1-7 - the word "wash" is the word baptism.
- 11) John's water baptism of Jesus designed to introduce Jesus Christ to Israel (John 1:31) and designed to bring the nation Israel to focus on the theme of their own need of repentance and forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3).
- 12) Christ's water baptism which was designed to fulfill all righteousness of the law and to publicly introduce Jesus as Messiah and King of Israel (Matt. 3:13-15; John 1:31).
- 13) Pentecostal water baptism specifically for Israel in view of the miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit to the Jews who believed in Christ (Acts 2:38, 41; 2:22, 36).
- 14) Believer's water baptism that is practiced in the N.T. church (I Cor. 1:14-17).

Now unless one sees the dispensational significance of these different baptisms at different times, one will be very confused.

Reason #3 - Because of a misunderstanding of baptism.

As we just mentioned, there are several different kinds of baptisms in the Bible, but probably the one baptism that has obscured the doctrine of Spirit baptism the most is water baptism. This lack of understanding concerning baptism is specifically due to those who overemphasize immersion.

Dr. Charles Ryrie said, "Overemphasis on water baptism, particularly by immersion, often obscures or even obliterates the doctrine of Spirit baptism. If the two truths are not distinguished, usually the truth of Spirit baptism gets lost, for it is regarded simply as another way of talking about water baptism" (*Basic Theology*, p. 362).

We will clearly see this point in this study. When some of the great passages concerning Spirit baptism are examined (i.e. Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:9-13), they have been so misinterpreted and so misunderstood that when the truth of Spirit baptism is revealed, it is a shock to most of God's people. These texts are often read at water baptism services prior to someone being immersed and they have nothing whatsoever to do with water baptism.

These passages were put into the Bible by God to educate us concerning the union with have with Jesus Christ at the moment of Spirit baptism (I Cor. 12:13). When it comes to the subject of baptism, as in all other doctrines, precision is demanded.

Reason #4 - Because of personal experiences.

There are many people who do not understand the doctrine of Spirit baptism because they have never been accurately taught and, as a result, they think it is about their personal experiences. They have had some personal experience or they know about someone else who claims it and they never do come to terms with sound doctrine because their authority is not the Bible, but their experience.

As we have said many times, we interpret experiences by the Bible; we do not interpret the Bible by experiences. Just because someone claims something does not make it true to God and His Word.

God has given us the right and the responsibility to carefully examine and question experiential matters in light of His Word for eight reasons:

- 1) We know from Scripture that two sources may produce the supernatural: God and Satan (i.e. Ex. 7:8-11).
- 2) We know from Scripture that we are in warfare against supernatural forces that are able to produce supernatural experiences (Eph. 6:10-18).
- 3) We know from Scripture that Satan has his own ministers who appear to be servants of righteousness, who will twist and tamper with God's truth (II Cor. 11:13-15). These ministers do not "rightly divide" Scripture (II Tim. 2:15).
- 4) We know from Scripture that as we near the end, doctrinal heresy will increase (I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 4:3).
- 5) We know from Scripture that as we near the end, experiential pleasure seekers will increase and influence others, drawing them away from truth and a disciplined life (II Tim. 3:1-10).
- 6) We have been charged to test people to see if what they are saying lines up with the Word of God (I John 4:1-3).
- 7) We know from Scriptures that leaders need to silence those teaching things unsound (Titus 1:9-10).
- 8) We know from Scripture that Jesus Christ expects the church not to permit any teaching to occur that could lead God's people astray (Rev. 2:20).

God's people must demand that experiences that people claim they have line up with the Word of God and if it does not, it is not of God. For many people, especially on a subject like Spirit baptism, their experiences become their authority and not God's written Word.

Reason #5 - Because of a failure to distinguish between Spirit baptism and Spirit filling.

Many believers are confused because they fail to understand the significant difference between Spirit baptism and Spirit filling. Two of the more prominent names in Christianity who had this problem were R. A. Torrey and D. L. Moody.

Dr. Charles Ryrie writes: “The lack of clarity is compounded by the fact that great men like R. A. Torrey and D. L. Moody were unclear in this area. Torrey taught that a person could or could not be baptized with the Spirit at the moment of salvation.” Dr. Ryrie went on to say that in Torrey’s biography of D. L. Moody, he said that Moody believed he was baptized by the Spirit after he was saved (*Basic Theology*, p. 363). However, in Moody’s defense, this teacher read the exhaustive biography on Moody written by his son and I did not see clear evidence of that.

The confusion of some of these individuals is due to their failure to distinguish between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Also it is well to note that D. L. Moody (1837-1899) and R. A. Torrey (1856-1928) were the forerunners of C. I. Scofield (1843-1921) and Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952). Dr. Scofield actually was the main officiate at the funeral of D. L. Moody and Dr. Scofield was also the great influence of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer.

Dr. Scofield’s monumental contribution to Christianity was a God-given ability to dispensationally understand and interpret the Bible and its doctrines. Prior to this era, Pneumatology was a fuzzy doctrine and there were not many attempts to systematize it. Dr. Chafer clearly saw the distinction between Spirit baptism and Spirit filling and cleared up much of the misunderstanding. So if Torrey and Moody misunderstood, it was due to lack of understanding and clarity on the doctrine.

Dr. Ryrie made a powerful point on this when he said, “Admittedly sometimes this lack of clarity is innocent; but regrettably sometimes these misconceptions are deliberately promoted. In either case, believers are robbed of an important truth that involves our union with Christ and a solid basis for holy living” (*Ibid.* p. 363).

Reason #6 - Because of a misunderstanding of true Biblical tongues.

For a sizeable number of people, they have been misinformed and led to believe that Spirit baptism is just a nice synonym for “speaking in tongues.” This is a total misunderstanding and misinterpretation of what Spirit baptism actually is. Furthermore, it actually distorts and destroys the true meaning of Spirit baptism and is a heresy that confuses many of God’s sheep.

Satan wants people confused about Spirit baptism. He does not want them knowing the truth about it as it relates to Biblical salvation. He realizes the potential power that a believer may have if he truly grasps this doctrine and his goal is to always keep people in ignorance of the truth.

QUESTION #3 – What does the word “baptize” actually mean?

In the English speaking world, most have a tendency to immediately think in terms of baptism as some connection between a human being and water. Now there is a real legitimate application that may be drawn between these two existences. However, it is not in the way one might think. To limit our understanding of “baptism” to the way most understand it is to miss the true meaning of it.

The word “baptism” did not conjure up the same image in the minds of those who lived in Biblical times. In order for us to truly understand the meaning of “Spirit baptism,” we must try to see it through the eyes of those first century people.

To illustrate how different we think about baptism and how the first century believer thought about it, we turn to a scholarly work that was written in the 1800’s by T. J. Conant, *The Meaning and Use of Baptizein*. Dr. Conant crawled through history and track down Greek writings to see how the term baptism was actually used (pp. 15-19). **He determined that it was used to refer to that part of something which was completely and totally submerged under water.**

1) Polybius, who lived 200 years before Christ, describes a sea fight between the Romans and the Carthaginians. The Carthaginians were very skillful in maneuvering ships and in describing the Roman Navy. Polybius writes: “on account of the unskillfulness of the crews they baptized (ebaptizon, εβαπτίζον) many of the vessels” (pp. 15-16). The obvious meaning is that they sank some of their own ships. So baptism would be understood as submerging a ship.

2) Plutarch, who was born about 50 years after Christ, in discussing the arms of engines which projected out from the ships, wrote: “Some (of the vessels) thrusting down, under a weight firmly fixed above, they sunk into the deep; and others, with iron hands or beaks like those cranes, hauling up by the prow till they were erect on the stern, they were submerged = baptized (baptizomena, βαπτίζομενα).” The obvious meaning is they were submerged or they sunk.

3) Aristotle, who was born 384 years before Christ, in speaking of rushes and seaweed, wrote: “...certain places full of rushes and seaweed, which, when it is ebb-tide, are not baptized (me baptizesthai, μη βαπτίζεσθαι), but when it is flood-tide are overflowed.” Here the meaning is that the seaweed is not submerged under water.

4) Polybius, who lived 200 years before Christ, describes an iron-headed spear and wrote: “And even if the spear falls into the sea, it is not lost, for it is compacted of both oak and pine, so that when the oaken part is baptized (baptizomenou, βαπτίζομενου) by the weight, the rest is buoyed up and easily recovered.” Again, the idea is that part of the spear is submerged under water (p. 18).

Again Polybius writes of the Roman army: “They passed through with difficulty, the foot of soldiers baptized (baptizomenoi, βαπτίζομενοι) as far as to the breasts.” The clear idea is that part of the body was submerged under water (p. 19).

The actual word “baptize” is one that means to dip, to immerse, to submerge and to sink. The particular verb “baptize” (βαπτίζω) was used in Greek to refer to the sinking of a ship. In Biblical Greek, the word was often used to refer to washing or bathing (Mark 7:4); of water baptism (I Cor. 1:14); of Spirit baptism (I Cor. 12:13); of repentance baptism (Matt. 3:11); of remission baptism (Mark 1:4); of Christ’s suffering baptism (Matt. 20:22-23; Luke 12:50); of Israel’s Mosaic baptism (Matt. 28:19). Every one of these baptisms features a form of the word “Baptizo” (βαπτίζω).

So we could conclude from this that in two of the Biblical uses of the word there is a definite reference to water (washing and water baptism) and in five of the Biblical uses of the word there is no connection to water (Spirit, repentance, remission, suffering, Mosaic). Obviously we would conclude that baptism must have a meaning that is able to be used in contexts that are not pertaining specifically to water.

The verb baptize (baptize, βαπτίζω) comes from a Greek root word “bapto” (βαπτω). Although this word only occurs three times in the New Testament, it is critical to understand the meaning because all baptism words stem from this.

The basic meaning of the word “bapto” βαπτω is: 1) To dip; 2) To dye. We are very accurate when we conclude that the word “bapto” βαπτω means to dip in dye (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 75).

When we look at the three passages in the New Testament where this word is used, we clearly see that the thing that is dipped into something contains the very substance of that in which it was dipped:

- 1) Luke 16:24 - the dipped finger contains the water.
- 2) John 13:26 - the dipped morsel contains the substance.
- 3) Rev. 19:13 - the dipped robe contains the blood.

In every instance, the thing dipped contains the actual substance of that into which it was dipped. This perfectly fits with the idea of dipping in dye. In this case, a piece of material is placed into dye so that when it is finally removed, it is a totally different color, which testifies of permanent change.

So in understanding the word “baptism” we may begin to formulate a true Biblical, doctrinal understanding of Spirit baptism. **Spirit baptism is the work of the Holy Spirit in which He places, submerges and immerses the believer into the Person and Work of Jesus Christ so that the person is completely linked and identified with Jesus Christ to the point that he is eternally changed forever in the sight of God.**

One who has been baptized by the Holy Spirit is instantly changed in color in the sight of God, and now stands robed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and is washed whiter than snow. Any honest examination of this word “baptize” demands this interpretation. This has nothing to do with water. Spirit baptism dips the believer deep into the blood vat of Jesus Christ so that from God’s perspective he is seen as really and vitally united and linked forever to Christ’s Person and Work.