

A Synchronous Baptism

by G.W. North

G.W. North explores the relationship between water baptism and Baptism in the Holy Spirit, emphasizing their distinct yet interconnected significance in the Christian faith.

Scripture: Acts 2:38

Topics: "Baptism", "Holy Spirit"

Description

G.W. North explores the relationship between water baptism and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, noting instances in the early church where these events occurred in different sequences. He highlights that in the cases of Paul and Cornelius, the Baptism in the Spirit occurred before water baptism, while in Samaria, it was the opposite. North suggests that on Pentecost and at Ephesus, both baptisms may have happened simultaneously, emphasizing the significance of understanding the spiritual implications of water baptism as a representation of the Holy Spirit's work. He cautions against viewing water baptism as a substitute for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, asserting that the latter is a permanent immersion into the Spirit. The sermon concludes with a call for humility in interpreting scripture, ensuring that knowledge does not overshadow the ministry of love.

Transcript

We have been looking at scripture records of original activities during the early apostolic era, gathering facts and possibilities or probabilities from the five accounts of baptism wherein the Baptism of the Spirit is also referred to in the context. Our discoveries may be summarised in the following manner: it is factual that upon two occasions, namely in the cases of Paul and the household of Cornelius, Baptism in the Spirit preceded baptism in water. It is also a fact that at Samaria baptism in water preceded Baptism in the Spirit. It is a distinct possibility that on the day of Pentecost and also at Ephesus Baptism in Spirit was co-incidental with baptism in water.

In the first instance the probability of this synchronous baptism is inferred in two ways:

(1) from the gargantuan proportions of the undertaking; it would have been superhuman indeed to have handled three thousand persons twice, making a total of six thousand handlings in one day, which had fully come at the time of the original outpouring, and was already passing swiftly to its close with the setting of the sun:

(2) by the absence of any hint on Peter's part that a period of time should elapse between water baptism and reception of the Spirit.

In the second instance, as we have seen, the possibility as distinct from the probability may be inferred from the actual grammatical construction of the text. Having had all these under consideration in the preceding pages, we will endeavour to draw some conclusions, doing so in a spirit of meekness, lest the puffiness of mere Bible knowledge take the place of and destroy the edifying ministry of love.

The Permanent Immersion

From our examination of these five instances when Baptism in Spirit is spoken of in close association with baptism in water, it emerges that the one is intended to be a picture of the other; the visible of the invisible; the physical of the spiritual. We observe also that because the water is a type of the Spirit, the baptiser, beside being a representative of the Lord Jesus, must also be a type or representation of Him. Indeed, if the baptiser does not baptise in the name of the Lord Jesus with full consciousness of the wonderful Person and things he represents to the one he baptises, he gravely errs and does more harm than good to that person.

Water baptism is no substitute for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, but is meant to represent it, for as the person's body is put into the water by the one baptising him, so does the Lord Jesus put that person's spirit into the Holy Spirit. The difference between the two is that in the former the body should be dipped in and out of the water, but in the latter the spirit should be in the Spirit permanently. Paul saw this very clearly. Although he was a Jew like Peter, unlike his predecessor in the faith, he never placed the great emphasis on water baptism that his colleague did. Unless he personally baptised Lydia and the gaoler at Philippi, there is no certain proof to be found in scripture that Paul baptised any, save those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17 and Acts 19. Paul was no great water-baptiser, but he was certainly insistent upon the Baptism in the Holy Ghost.

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