

# *Theology* on *the Web.org.uk*

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes.  
Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit  
or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the  
copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the  
ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the  
links below:



*Buy me a coffee*

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbadshaw>

---

A table of contents for the *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* can  
be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_cbij.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_cbij.php)

## Spirit Baptism

**Warren Vanhetloo, ThD, DD  
Professor, Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary**

Teaching concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit is abundant in the Bible. Variations of interpretations of this Spirit baptism are numerous. This study is not a survey of various views, although a few will be noted, but an endeavor to look directly at Scripture passages. There is here no attempt at innovation, but an endeavor to be clear and accurate in comprehending an important teaching of the Word of God.

The term "spirit baptism" does not appear in Scripture. It is, for convenience, used to parallel a usage of "water baptism" for clarification, but "water baptism" as a term does not occur either. Passages usually indicate whether the Holy Spirit or water is involved.

Verses using the future tense, speaking of Spirit baptism as yet coming, will be considered first. Next the historical incidents will be examined wherever Spirit baptism is claimed. Then a third section examining doctrinal instruction concerning baptism of the Spirit will endeavor to clarify and adequately identify what is distinct to differentiate this work of the Holy Spirit from His other works.

### Predictions of Spirit Baptism

Advance predictions of a coming baptism by the Holy Spirit come from two sources, John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **John the Baptist**

Two important declarations stand out in the proclamation of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36) and "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2). Both of these point to the soon-to-appear Messiah. A third declaration, surely equally as important as the other two; both announces the expected Messiah and also emphasizes an important aspect of His work: He shall baptize with the Holy Spirit.

**The Importance of John's Teaching.** Inasmuch as only a few things are related by all four Gospel writers, it is impressive that all four present this declaration of John. Matthew records John as preaching, "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" (3:11). Mark relates, "And preached, saying, There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (1:7-8). Luke corresponds: "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (3:16). John, writing later and in a different context (probably recording things heard first-hand by the apostle John) relates, "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the Same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:32-33).

The great importance of the coming Spirit baptism is evident in thus being recorded in all four Gospels. Three times this prediction by John the Baptist is also referred to in the book of Acts (1:5; 11:16; 19:4). Only occurrences in the Gospels are being considered in this section. In all these verses Spirit baptism is presented as being far greater than the water baptism introduced by John. John's baptism is declared to be a "likeness" preparation for the great work of the One to follow.

That the coming Person was superior is declared by John the Baptist in three ways. (1) John is not worthy in relation to Him to perform a menial task of preparing to wash feet dusty from travel (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16). (2) Although John did not know the identity of this anticipated Messiah until the time of His baptism (John 1:33), he could declare that He existed before John (John 1:15,

30) as eternal deity. As to His human nature, He was some six months younger than John (Luke 1:26, 41-45). (3) The third way John declares the person Jesus to be mightier than himself is his witness of the visible descent of the Holy Spirit and the remaining of that Holy Spirit (John 1:33) in a manner greatly different from the relationship of the Spirit to prophets. The Spirit was not given by measure unto Him (John 3:34).

This superior person will perform superior work. Other works proclaimed by John (as Lamb, taking away the sin of the world, for instance) are not considered here; only His work as related to John's act of baptizing is to be considered.

**The Authorization for John's Teaching.** John baptized as a result of direct command from God (John 1:33). The question of the authorities. "Why baptizest thou?" (John 1:25) was not doubt concerning his priestly lineage nor of God speaking to him as to a prophet (the people received him as a prophet, Matt 14:5); the concern of the Pharisees was his authorization to introduce something new. He could do so not as the Messiah (John 1:20) nor the end-time Elijah (John 1:21). He himself was only the voice announcing One greater (John 1:23, 26-27). He had been sent by God to immerse in water (John 1:33). That immersion was part of his predictive preparation.

The inquiry of the Pharisees indicates three significant differences concerning what John was doing as compared with Jewish ritual. (1) John was an administrator. Jewish proselyte baptisms were self-baptisms. (2) John's was a dipping. Jewish washings were for ceremonial cleansing or involved a period of soaking. John's was a going down into the water and coming up out of the water. (3) John's baptism was of Jewish believers on the basis of personal repentance. It was not connected with ceremonial purification nor acceptance into the Jewish nation. Institution of such a radically different procedure necessitated explanation of authorization. Was it from heaven or of men? (Matt 21:25; Mark 11:30; Luke 20:4).

The radically new practice of being baptized by an administrator is most evident in the name assigned to John. He was not known as John son of Zachariah. He was John the baptizer, the dunker, the dipper, the immerser. He was so much the baptizing one that the article was even dropped; he was called John Baptizer (Matt 14:8).

Jewish baptizers were for certain limited persons or things in connection with ceremonial cleansing or initiation of proselytes. John was preaching that individual Jews should repent and be baptized. Jewish ritual was in the setting of the Jewish nation. John's baptism

portrayed the personal relationship of each individual believer to God. Clearly to the Pharisees the water baptism of John was new and different.

**The Content of John's Teaching.** A Christian is impressed with two other features that characterized John's baptism and clearly distinguished it from any somewhat similar practices in Judaism. (1) The preaching of repentance included proclamation of the Messiah, and (2) the water baptism portrayed a far more important baptism by the Holy Spirit.

Certain disciples were in Ephesus who knew only the form of John's baptism but not the reality (Acts 19:1-3). "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus" (Acts 19:4). True repentance is "to God from idols" (I Thess 1:9). These disciples at Ephesus may have turned from sin but they did not have the true message of John's baptism, turning to the Messiah. John's baptism looked forward as today's baptism look back chronologically. The object of faith was the same, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul tested the validity of their baptism by inquiring whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed (Acts 19:2). Two assumptions seem obvious here, (1) their repentance must have followed Pentecost, that is, the time of the coming of the Holy Spirit and (2) those who believed the preaching of John concerning the Messiah believed the same message being preached by Paul and others and participated in the same ministry of the Holy Spirit. Had these disciples believed on John's Messiah, they would have received the Holy Spirit; when they do believe they do receive (Acts 19:5-6).

John's preaching and practice proclaimed the person of Christ. His actions also proclaimed a special work of Christ. John's immersion in water forefigured a Spirit immersion for which the Messiah would be the authorizing agent. The Messiah about to appear was greatly superior to John, and His baptizing work would be a far greater work than the water immersions practiced by John. The nature of John's water baptisms directly aided to comprehend the greater Holy Spirit immersions soon to come.

**The Contrast of John's Teaching.** John's water baptism proclaimed a two-fold fulfillment, "I indeed baptize you with water; . . . He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Luke 3:16; Matt 3:11). The contexts of Luke three and Matthew three make clear a dual expectation rather than just one.

Those who propose a single fulfillment see the fire and the coming of the Holy Spirit as identical, in the sense of "even"; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, even with fire. The "proof" usually cited is Acts 2:3: "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." It needs to be noted that there is no reference to fire in connection with other baptizing or fillings. More important, the "like as" of Acts 2:3 speaks of a manner of appearance similar to tongues of fire, not of a fulfillment, a baptism of fire or a fiery baptism.

Context greatly favors recognition of the fire as hell-fire/judgment. John was warning his audience to flee from the wrath to come (Luke 3:7; Matt 3:7). The axe would be laid unto the root of the trees; every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit (repentance, v 8) will be hewn down, and "cast into the fire" (Luke 3:9; Matt 3:8-9). Such judgment they cannot hope to escape because of their lineage (Luke 3:8; Matt 3:9). Such judgment is the prerogative of One who is able either to bless with the gift of the Holy Spirit or to condemn "with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable" (Luke 3:16-17; Matt 3:11-12) Burning the chaff with unquenchable fire does not describe what happened on the day of Pentecost. John was declaring that God will judge all men by Jesus Christ (cf Rom 2:16).

**The Teaching of John's Baptism.** It remains yet to investigate the significance of the great work of the Holy Spirit being portrayed by the baptism of John. This centers on the word chosen to report the activity of John and to predict the greater fulfillments by Holy Spirit and by fire. The word used is always *baptizo* and never *bapto* (and never *rhamntizo*, to sprinkle). The word *bapto* included immersion and was also used in the sense of dipping in (John 13:26) or "to dye" (Rev 19:13). The intensive *baptizo* also meant to immerse, to dip repeatedly, to sink (of a ship) or to perish in Koine Greek. Used metaphorically, it is usually translated "overwhelmed" as by sickness, faults, or lusts. It means to go under or sink into such as intoxication, sleep, or the sea.

Concerning water baptism, the concept immerse rather than overwhelm is clearly to be preferred. Jesus straightway came up out of the water (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10). John was a dipper or dunker. Under and up are both part of the picture of John's water baptism. The predicted baptism with fire, however, permits no concept of relief; to sink or to perish, or to be fully and finally overwhelmed are both consistent with Scriptural teaching concerning everlasting punishment.

Now, concerning the predicted Spirit baptism, will it be of the nature of a dipping or of overwhelming? Use of the figure later by Jesus favors the latter. Jesus said, "I am come to send fire on the earth: and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" (Luke 12:49-51). The "fire" here is division rather than peace. The immersion or overwhelming portrays His coming death.

Again, the disciples were seeking for honor (Mark 10:37), "But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? (cf Luke 22:42) and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized" (Mark 10:38-39). Jesus was speaking of His coming death and also of the physical death to be suffered by His disciples. The metaphorical "overwhelmed" is to be favored as applying to the deaths of the disciples as well as to the cup to be drunk by the Lord.

In keeping with later emphasis on buried into death and raised up from the dead (Rom 6:4), the figure of dipping needs to be recognized. John's water immersion included the "straightway" coming up out of the water; so Jesus' experience, as He anticipates it, may include not only being overwhelmed in death but also coming forth from death. The "gospel" preached by the water baptism of John seems to have included representation of death, burial, and resurrection (cf I Cor 15:1-4).

John's water immersion pointed toward a coming One who would have a blessing or judging ministry far superior to John's ordinance. Immersion in water is a human act; sending the Holy Spirit or condemning to everlasting punishment are divine acts. John proclaimed his ordinance was commanded by God. The picture employed included not only submersion but even more important (except for fire) a coming forth.

### The Resurrected Jesus

The importance of the coming baptism by the Holy Spirit was made very clear by the post-resurrection instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:3-8). He both gave information concerning fulfillment and also stressed the authority of the promise.

**Time and Place of Fulfillment.** The time of the anticipated immersion by the Spirit would be shortly after His ascension, "not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). Jesus had clearly taught that the two events

were related: "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). John explained that Jesus spake "of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39).

Peter, to justify water baptism in the house of Cornelius, argued: "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11:15-16). The "not many days hence" of Jesus and the "beginning" of Peter identify Pentecost (Acts 2) as the time of fulfillment.

The place of fulfillment is just as clear. "They should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait" (Acts 1:4); "then returned they unto Jerusalem" (Acts 1:12); "they went up into an upper room" (Acts 1:13); "about an hundred and twenty" (Acts 1:15); and there "they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1).

**Four Authoritative Promises.** In His instructions to His disciples on the day of His ascension, Jesus stressed the importance of the coming baptism by the Holy Spirit by reminding them of four ways the promise had been made. It was, first and foremost, a "promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). Jesus had proclaimed, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent Me" (John 5:30; cf John 14:10). The necessity of His departure (John 16:7) indicates sequence in the great plan and purpose of God the Father. God's eternal design included promise of the soon-to-be fulfilled baptism by the Holy Spirit.

The second one who had authoritatively taught concerning the coming Spirit baptism was the incarnate Jesus during His earthly ministry (Acts 1:4). The disciples assembled on the Mount of Olives had frequently heard Jesus speak of his coming.

The third person recognized as having divine authority was John the Baptist (Acts 1:5). Most of the early disciples of Jesus had been disciples of John the Baptist and had heard him teach concerning the anticipated Spirit baptism as being of much greater importance than his water baptism.

The fourth authoritative witness spoken of by Jesus (Acts 1:4-5) outlasted John the Baptist and continues through the present age. God appointed water baptism as a special teaching symbol to make clear a more important work. Under John and Jesus the symbol was a promise; since Pentecost it has served as a divinely appointed ordinance to call to remembrance historical fulfillment at Pentecost and individual accomplishment at the time of conversion. Man has

not invented or gradually developed this significance; God himself set the alignment: John with water, Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Each water immersion is a public preaching of Gospel truth. Each is an authoritative proclamation of promise and fulfillment.

The fulfillment of baptism by the Holy Spirit to take place in Jerusalem only a few days afterward was so important that it had been promised by God the Father, by God the Son, by a forewarner, and by a forepicture. Baptism of the Spirit cannot be set aside as unimportant or insignificant. Great preparation was made in anticipation.

### **Indications of Spirit Baptism**

Historical incidents relating fulfillment of Spirit baptism appear in the book of Acts and in the epistles. Doctrinal instruction as it appears in these passages will be treated extensively in the third section. Historical records indicate that Spirit baptism first occurred at Pentecost and thereafter at each conversion.

#### **Baptisms in Acts**

Three passages in the book of Acts speak of occasions when the baptism of the Spirit took place. From these passages and teaching in the epistles it can be recognized that Spirit baptism normally took place at the time of each conversion (cf Acts 2:38) even though direct reference to Spirit baptism may not appear in the text.

**Acts 2:1-41.** Two Spirit baptisms seem to be recorded in Acts chapter two. The first was of the 120 gathered in the upper room (Acts 2:1-4). The event included miracles of sight and sound. All present were included. All were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in various languages as directed (Acts 1:4, 8-11). Peter's later reference speaks of this which happened "at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). As for relation to water baptism, all 120 seem to have earlier been immersed in water by John, by John's disciples, or by disciples of Jesus (John 4:2).

Peter's preaching elicits the inquiry, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) to which Peter replies, "Repent and be baptized (immersed in water) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (*eis*, on the basis of) the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). Peter preached, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21) and promised that all who believe will receive the same gift the 120 had just received (Acts 2:38).

From other passages to be considered shortly, it is evident that permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit and baptism by the Spirit occurred at the same time. Filling (control) by the Spirit may or may not be manifest. Indwelling and Spirit baptism take place at conversion. Peter speaking to Jews or Jewish proselytes proclaims that every single believer (Acts 2:38) will participate in the newly introduced works of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 11:15-17.** "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts 10:44; 11:15). Peter said it was "as I began to speak" (Acts 11:15). Peter before the church at Jerusalem stressed that it was entirely the work of God, not manipulated by men (Acts 11:17) and observed by six Jewish believers other than himself (Acts 11:12). "They of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter, can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:45-48).

Peter proclaimed that what had happened in the house of Cornelius (1) was that which John the Baptist had predicted (Acts 11:16); (2) was the work of God, not men; (3) was the same as at Pentecost; (4) occurred when the Gentiles believed the preaching of the Gospel, again that "whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43); (5) was evident in that they glorified God using other languages; and (6) justified water immersion and acceptance by other believers. The church at Jerusalem concurred (Acts 11:18).

**Acts 19:1-7.** The third passage incorporates both contrast and exception. The contrast is between the true believing of John's baptism by Apollos (Acts 18:25) and the empty ritual of twelve others. Apollos, knowing only the baptism of John, believed in and proclaimed the One who should come after, though he needed explanation concerning the fulfillment (Acts 18:26). Apollos, knowing properly the baptism of John (1) was an eloquent preacher, (2) mightily proclaimed the Scriptures, (3) was instructed in the way of the Lord, (4) was fervent in spirit, (5) spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord (Acts 18:24-25). Apollos, however, had been led of the Spirit to Corinth before the twelve came to Ephesus (Acts 18:17-19:1).

Paul ascertained that these twelve had not received the Holy Spirit at the time they believed (apparently after Pentecost); that they had

not even heard of John's prediction of the coming Holy Spirit; that they had heard only of repentance for sin but not faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 19:2-4). They knew the form of water immersion but not the significance of the form, not the reality it should portray.

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:5-6). The usual pattern of the period, which Paul expected, was that the Holy Spirit was received when a sinner repented and believed on the Messiah; the exception that is recorded on this occasion is that the public recognition of the Holy Spirit coming upon them was at the time when they obeyed concerning water immersion.

A similar explanation by Dr Luke had been necessary when he related the conversions in Samaria. Peter and John "when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:15-17). The usual pattern that Luke assumes all believers are familiar with is that the Holy Spirit comes at conversion; concerning these at Samaria explanation is needed (v 16).

The reason for the delay at Samaria seems to have been so that a clear oneness be recognized; the believers in Samaria were not to consider a separate local form of Christianity (cf John 4:20). There was to be a distinct tie to believers in Jerusalem.

The sequence in Ephesus stresses proper significance of the ordinance. The twelve had been immersed in water before. Only with proper preaching of the Messiah and proper faith in that Messiah does immersion have the intended symbolism. Only upon proper obedience did God grant outward manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

### Baptism in the Epistles

References to baptism by the Holy Spirit in the epistles will be examined in this section for evidences of historical fulfillment and again in the next section for doctrinal teachings. Five passages are pertinent.

**Galatians 3:27.** Paul reminded the Galatians that they had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, not by the works of the law (Gal 3:2). Believers in Galatia "are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26). "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). Paul thus indicates that all true believers in the churches of Galatia had been baptized (immersed) into Christ at the time they exercised true saving faith. There is

certainly no possibility of considering that water immersion was "by faith." The figure of immersion was used to enable them to comprehend the reality of being immersed into Christ. They had put on Christ by being immersed into Christ.

**I Corinthians 12:13.** To believers at Corinth Paul wrote, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." All true believers at Corinth are included in the ones so baptized. Paul is too (we), and Sosthenes (I Cor 1:1), and likewise all who have believed. All have been immersed into one body. There is only one body of Christ (v 12) including all believers. The church at Corinth was viewed as a body (vv 14-27). Water immersion was related to the local body (I Cor 1:13-17) as portraying the one baptism by the Holy Spirit into one body. Placement in the local body was of God (v 18); placement of the many members in the body of Christ (v 12) was similarly of God.

**Colossians 2:12.** Writing to believers at Colosse Paul assured them: "Ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col 2:10-13).

Believers at Colosse were not circumcised in the flesh but had experienced the spiritual cleansing which circumcision pictured. They had experienced water baptism, but in parallel Paul reminds them of the Spirit baptism which water baptism pictures. These believers had been baptized by the Holy Spirit through faith. Although Paul had not been present when they were saved and knew about them only from others, not personally, he knew doctrinally that true faith includes Spirit baptism.

**Romans 6:3-4.** As when writing to the Colossians, Paul had not personally been to Rome, yet he could declare confidently that they had been baptized into Jesus Christ. The reality of their Spirit baptism was his first response to any who might argue to continue in sin that grace might abound (Rom 6:1). Paul declares believers are dead to sin (v 2), buried with Jesus Christ by baptism into death (v 4).

There is obviously no way to understand what Paul says apart from recognizing that the symbolism of death, burial and resurrection was portrayed in the water immersion of converts. Water baptism cannot be expunged from the passage. But Paul using the language and figure of water baptism is reminding believers at Rome of the spiritual reality

in the realm of death to sin and walking in newness of life. This baptism is reminding believers at Rome of the spiritual reality in the realm of death to sin and walking in newness of life. This baptism by the Spirit is not a goal or a second work of grace; Paul proclaims it was historical fact at the time of conversion of every true believer at Rome. He knows this, not by personal observation, but because in this dispensation it is universally true.

I Peter 3:21. Peter wrote from Babylon (5:13) to believers in areas first evangelized by Paul: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1). The epistle evidences personal familiarity with the recipients, their circumstances and needs. Peter urged faithful suffering (3:8-17) as following the example of Christ (3:18). Just as the deliverance of eight souls from the flood (3:18) was a figure (v 21) of God's provision through the death and resurrection of Christ (v 18), so Peter considered that water immersion was a figure of God's spiritual work (v 21). The immersion that now saves us is not a water cleansing from the filth of the flesh but a spiritual relationship to God through the resurrected Jesus Christ (v 21). Peter spoke of Spirit baptism as the "antitype," the water immersion providing a similarity, a likeness, enabling comprehension of the reality. In three ways Peter made clear that the baptism of which he spoke was not water immersion, (1) as a pattern, (2) not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but (3) the inner relationship toward God.

Peter was not speaking of a second blessing or a limited experience. The "elect" (1:2) all have experienced this true immersion at conversion, and all who continue to be saved are similarly immersed into the death and resurrection of Jesus. This reference by Peter makes it evident that there was awareness of Spirit baptism wherever the Gospel was preached. It was not understood as having occurred only at Pentecost and in the home of Cornelius. It was not a teaching peculiar to Paul unknown to other disciples (see Gal 1:12; 2:2). It was universally recognized that water immersion pictured spirit immersion.

The survey of historical occurrences in Acts and the epistles has shown that Spirit baptism began on the day of Pentecost and thereafter occurred at the time of conversion regularly, universally. Paul taught churches where he had ministered (in Galatia, Corinth) and where he had not been (Colosse, Rome) that Spirit baptism had taken place in their lives by faith. Preparatory promises by John the Baptist were known at least as far as Ephesus (Acts 19:4). Their Spirit baptism was to be understood through the symbolism of water immersion. Realization of the truth of their Spirit baptism should result in a difference in their walk. The importance of the doctrine of Spirit

baptism is thus evident also from the records of historical occurrences in Acts and the epistles as well as in the previous predictions of John and Jesus.

### **Doctrine, Inferences, Observations**

So many and various things merit treatment in this section that items will be numbered for convenience. In doing so, some duplication cannot be avoided. The aim is to arrive at a comprehensive and correct understanding of the teachings of Scripture.

1. **The doctrine of Spirit baptism needs to be recognized as a major doctrine in the New Testament.** Advance predictions and doctrinal explanations make evident that this is a significant activity of the Holy Spirit. Practice and proclamation of John the Baptist greatly stressed the importance of the expectant Spirit immersion. Understandings and practices in the churches (Acts) and doctrinal instruction and exhortation unto churches (epistles) further stress the importance of this distinct work of the Holy Spirit. Spirit baptism is not to be relegated to the realm of secondary teachings nor is it to be merged in confusion with indwelling or filling of the Spirit. The doctrine of Spirit baptism is a major doctrine of the New Testament, an important truth for the church age.

2. **John's water baptism prepared for the anticipated baptism by the Holy Spirit.** It did so as to time (Pentecost) and the person responsible (Messiah). It did so in its relation to repentance and faith in the Messiah. It also did so in its picture of death and resurrection. John's work was not done in a corner (cf Acts 26:26). His teaching of the anticipated greater work of the Messiah, recorded by all four Gospel writers and again in Acts, exalted the benefit of Spirit baptism far above benefit from water immersion. His disciples knew and the people of the nation knew of his proclamation. John the Immerser was given a very important task of preparation for a significant fulfillment, using water immersion to prepare people for a far greater immersion into a far greater body by a far greater agent, the Holy Spirit.

3. **Water baptism included likenesses designed to enable comprehension of the coming baptism by the Holy Spirit.** Immersion was by an outside agent, a dipper or dunker, upon a willing subject. Repentance, conversion, change of life, belief on the Messiah already teach that "if a man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor 5:17). The immersion in water by John already prepared for understanding that a believer is dead unto sin and has been raised unto newness of life

(Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12). Accompaniments and enablements in the fulfillment of course exceed the spiritual truths taught by John's baptism. In that they correspond, they teach and predict superior truth in connection with the coming Spirit baptism. Proclaimed teaching and pictured teaching combine to enlighten concerning several significant doctrines directly related to Spirit baptism. Most significantly teaching and enactment by John points to the coming reality by the Messiah. Parallels and proclamations were adequate to comprehend anticipated fulfillment.

4. **Spirit baptism did not occur until Pentecost.** Jesus had said, "not many days hence" (Acts 1:5) but still spoke of it as future. His going away first was necessary (John 16:7). Spirit baptism was a dispensationally distinct work that had a historical beginning. The thief on the cross had assurance of immediate entrance into heaven even before sundown (Luke 23:43), but prior to Pentecost was not immersed into the body of Christ which had its beginning formation at Pentecost. Spirit baptism does not have to do with attaining heaven so much as honor in heavenly relationships. Old Testament saints are not "deficient" in grace; church age saints are just different in the manner in which God displays His grace. Forgiveness and regeneration were experienced generation after generation following the sin of Adam, through each dispensation. Only at and following Pentecost did Jesus baptize with the Holy Spirit.

5. **All believers since Pentecost are baptized by the Holy Spirit at conversion.** Paul says all (*pantes*), whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free (I Cor 12:13). Paul says, "So many of us" (*hosoi*), both to indicate that it applies only to believers but also to include every last believer (Rom 6:3). It is "by faith" (Gal 3:26) rather than by works or law-activity. That it was manifest by reception of the Holy Spirit (indwelling) was the basis for the inquiry of Paul (Acts 19:2). "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom 8:9). Peter preached reception of the Holy Spirit by all who believe (Acts 2:38). Beginning at Pentecost indwelling and immersion into the body of Christ occur at the time of believing faith for all who believe.

6. **The body being formed by Spirit baptism is exclusive to this dispensation.** The time of beginning of formation is clearly at Pentecost. The completion of this unique formation will be when "the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom 11:25), the rapture of the church which is His body. This full body will be the special bride of Christ (Rev 19:7-9).

The nature of this spirit-formed body is not to be confused with the six foot plus-or-minus frame of the incarnation, presently in heaven

itself. That physical body undergoes no change in relation to the formation of a special body for God's eternal purposes. The body formed by Spirit baptism is a unity (one body, I Cor 12:13) having a great variety of members (I Cor 12:12, 14, 20), composed of every single believer of this dispensation. Christ is the head of that body (Eph 1:22-23). There is a union, a oneness of Christ and of all who make up that body, a unity to be understood in the way in which a man and a woman are one flesh (Eph 5:31-32).

God had not in OT revelation made known (Eph 3:5) the mystery now revealed through Paul (Eph 3:3) that Gentiles should be of the same body (Eph 3:6) as Jewish believers. God began special instruction preparatory to the beginning formation of that body at Pentecost through the preaching of John and the immersion of repentant believers.

Absence of any hint of water baptism in either tribulation or millennial periods indicates that water immersion is observed solely through the church age as a special ordinance corresponding to the formation of the spiritual body of Christ. Participants in this body formed by Spirit baptism are solely from the dispensation of the local church, from Pentecost to the rapture.

7. **Spirit baptism is into one body, the body of Christ.** Paul makes this very clear: For by (*en*) one Spirit are we all immersed into (*eis*) one body (I Cor 12:13), For as many of you as have been immersed into (*eis*) Christ have put on Christ . . . ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:27-28), and so many of us as were immersed into (*eis*) Jesus Christ were immersed into (*eis*) His death (Rom 6:3).

From these three passages it is very clear that Spirit baptism is not to be conceived of as the Holy Spirit coming upon a believer nor entering into a believer. Nor does it appear to be proper to conceive of Spirit baptism as though the Holy Spirit is the "element" of the immersing. Believers are not immersed into the Holy Spirit. Believers are immersed into the body of Christ.

That Paul could write to the Corinthians that he (we, I Cor 12:13) and believers at Corinth had been immersed into one body seems to make very clear that a local church was not in mind. Paul had been immersed in water in Damascus (Acts 9:18) and had aligned himself with believers and was active in witnessing there (Acts 9:19). He had been immersed into the one body when he believed (Acts 9:6) and was properly addressed as "brother" (Acts 9:17). Surely Paul had been a member of the congregation at Corinth, but that was not by water immersion (cf I Cor 1:13-17) into the local body. A local church is a body of Christ but not the body of Christ. The local church is an

earthly model to help us understand heavenly reality. Baptism by the Holy Spirit places a believer positionally into one great body, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ being formed throughout this dispensation.

8. Believers are immersed by the Holy Spirit rather than into the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the agent. The usage of *en* is instrumental, not local.

A parallel may be of help to clear up some possible confusion. God the Father created all things, yet of God the Son it is declared that "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). Both statements are true and non-contradictory. So too the Son-Messiah will immerse by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will immerse believers into the unique body of this dispensation. One is the authorizing, initiating agent, the other is the accomplishing agent.

Water immersion may be into (*eis*) the Jordan (Mark 1:9), in (*en*) water (Mark 1:8) or in (*en*) the river Jordan (Mark 1:5). The immersed comes up (*ana*) from or out of (*ek*) the water (Mark 1:10). Water is never baptized upon anyone. When a passive form is used, a person is not baptized by water but by an agent (*hypo*, Mark 1:5). Believers have all been immersed into (*eis*) one body by (*en*) one Spirit (I Cor 12:13). The preposition *eis* admits of no instrumental usage; *en* does. Paul reminds saints at Corinth, "the world shall be judged by (*en*) you" (I Cor 6:2) for "ye are justified in (or by, *en*) the name of the Lord Jesus, and by (*en*) the Spirit of our God" (I Cor 6:11). The disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, shall we smite with (*en*) the sword?" (Luke 22:49). The Pharisees charged that Jesus cast out devils by (*en*) Beelzebub (Matt 12:24). God will judge all the world by (*en*) the God-man (Acts 17:31).

John's announcement, then, may be understood to be, "I indeed immerse you with (*en*, both means and element) water . . . He shall immerse you with (*en*, instrumental) the Holy Ghost, and with (*en*, perhaps both instrumental and element) fire" (Matt 3:11).

Quite obviously Spirit baptism does not suggest the death and resurrection of the Holy Spirit. It is union in Christ, oneness in Christ includes imputed participation in His death and resurrection. It is closely aligned with imparted spiritual life, death unto sin and resurrection unto newness of life. There is no likeness nor parallel suggestion immersion into the Holy Spirit: consistently Scripture declares that believers are immersed by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.

**9. Both Father and Son have sent the Holy Spirit.** Jesus is the author-agent of Spirit baptism according to John the Baptist. This was a promise of the Father (Acts 1:4). Jesus "will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, . . . even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16- 17); "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father" (John 15:26); "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts" (Gal 4:6).

But the Holy Spirit was also sent by Jesus as well as by the Father: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you" (John 15:26); "This Jesus . . . hath shed forth this" (Acts 2:32-33). Spirit baptism was by the Lord Jesus Christ and also by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the administrator-agent who baptizes believers into the body of Christ.

Note that Jesus did not suggest that the Holy Spirit did not exist before Pentecost (He is eternal God), nor that the Holy Spirit has been absent from the world and will be coming for the first time, nor that the Holy Spirit had been inactive. The Holy Spirit had been active in creation (Gen 1:2), at the flood (Gen 6:3), and throughout OT revelation. Jesus indicated a different activity, a greater activity, even an exclusive activity in the special baptizing work begun at Pentecost. The uniting of all believers, Jews and Gentiles, into a great heavenly body was part of God's eternal plan for the ages. In proper sequence, both God the Father and God the Son sent God the Holy Spirit unto increased activity in the world.

**10. Spirit baptism is somatic union, not soteric union.** Spirit baptist has to do with an eternal honor among the redeemed, not with the redemption that makes that honor possible. Spirit baptism forms together into one body (*soma*) of Christ. Imputed union with Christ is as true of Abraham as of any believer of this age. It includes the imputation of a believer's sin to Jesus (Rom 4:3) and the imputation of His righteousness to the believer (II Cor 5:21).

The soteric union (at the time of salvation) includes and is accompanied by justification, conversion, regeneration, indwelling, etc. The soteric union also includes, from Pentecost to the rapture, the somatic union: every believer at the moment of salvation is immersed into the body of Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity.

Just as death (spiritual, physical and deserved eternal death) came upon all who were in Adam (the seminal head of the race) when he sinned (Rom 5:12), even "so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). All who receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior become one in Christ, their substitute Lamb. This soteric

oneness is always accompanied by regeneration and is manifest in newness of life (II Cor 5:17). There is no imputation of righteousness without an impartation of a righteous ability, the new nature.

From Pentecost to the rapture another work is also present. All who believe in Jesus are judicially made one in a special relationship as a body of oneness. There is no Spirit baptism unless there is soteric union, including regeneration. There is no later second activity at some time following conversion; "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom 8:9). If there is no indwelling of the Spirit, there has been no regeneration and no union into the body of Christ.

It is likely that the priestly prayer of Jesus, "that they all may be one" (John 17:21), is a request for the somatic union of Spirit baptism rather than for soteric union of all believers of all ages. As the Lamb of God He is to die to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). All who are born from above have been born not of flesh but of the Holy Spirit (John 3:6). The "even as we are one" (John 17:22) seems not to refer to nature but to interrelationships, closeness. The disciples of Jesus and all who believe on Jesus through their word (John 17:20) are to become "one in us" (John 17:21). Soteric union is the basis for entrance into heaven; somatic union is the interrelationship of all believers of this dispensation in their eternal oneness as a body honoring God.

In the NT the phrase "in Christ" may sometimes refer to the soteric union, sometimes to the somatic union. Since the phrase is not used of people other than those of the church age as being in Christ, some have tended to recognize soteric union in Christ as true only of the present dispensation and not of OT saints. Although soteric union is at times evident (II Cor 5:17), in the great preponderance of occurrences it is the somatic union that is indicated by the phrase "in Christ." "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). All who are in the body of Christ benefit from the substitutionary work of Christ; not all reckoned in the oneness of deliverance, however, participate in the distinct oneness of the body of Christ, only believers of the church age. All believers of all time are included in the soteric union; all believers of this dispensation also are formed into somatic oneness, a special body of Christ.

11. The work of Spirit baptism is distinct from other works of the Holy Spirit. Several works of the Spirit appear in every dispensation, such as regeneration, indwelling, filling, etc. But the work of uniting believers into the body of Christ occurs only in this dispensation.

Several works of God occur at conversion, including Spirit baptism, but these are not to be confused nor merged.

The promised baptism first occurred at Pentecost, but the extensive record of that day deals with filling (control, Acts 2:4) rather than relating the heavenly accomplishment of first uniting believers into the body of Christ. This of course does not deny that Spirit baptism took place nor suggest that Spirit baptism is less important than being filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit. It does stress that Spirit baptism is non-experiential, that is, it takes place judicially in the courts of heaven, not in the time-space continuum.

Thus all that believers can know about Spirit baptism (1) comes from declarations of Scripture and (2) is accepted by faith. There is no experience of Spirit baptism. No emotion gives evidence of being united by the Holy Spirit into the eternal spiritual gathering of believers of this dispensation called in honor "the body of Christ." Regeneration is experienced; filling is experienced; baptism is a distinct work of the Holy Spirit, unique to this dispensation and non-experiential in nature. It is not to be confused with other activities of the Holy Spirit.

12. **Conversion is not to be confused with Spirit baptism.** Many repented at the preaching of John and were immersed in water publicly witnessing to repentance for sin and faith in the Lamb/Messiah. For them, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was yet future, at Pentecost. Mary the mother of Jesus and His brethren (Acts 1:14) believed after the resurrection (soteric) but were not immersed into the body of the Savior (somatic union) until Pentecost. Abraham believed God unto righteousness (Rom 4:3), but Abraham's place in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28-29) will be different from those assembled in that day as the body of Christ. Any one saved in any age is saved (1) by grace, (2) by the shed blood of Jesus, and (3) by faith. Conversion and Spirit baptism occur at the same moment; both are works of the Holy Spirit. Both are further accompanied by the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer in this dispensation. Scripture does not confuse these several works, nor should believers.

13. **Spirit baptism is always accompanied by justification, regeneration, indwelling, etc.** Although a distinct work, Spirit baptism is never a separate work. Even though other aspects of conversion have occurred in other dispensations, in this dispensation there is never regeneration without Spirit baptism nor Spirit baptism without regeneration.

Some aspects of our so great salvation occur at the moment of exercising saving faith. Others continue, as growth follows birth, such

as sanctification, fellowship, filling. Some follow physical death or physical resurrection, such as full glorification. At conversion, repentance and faith correspond simultaneously with regeneration. These are both experiential--occurring on earth. Justification is also simultaneous, but is judicial in nature, in the courts of heaven. Spirit baptism corresponds to justification in two ways, (1) it is heavenly, non-experiential in nature, and (2) is instantaneous and simultaneous with union with Christ, a completed fact at the moment of conversion. Believers are not to seek Spirit baptism nor to seek to be more in the body of Jesus nor to be in a different relationship to other believers in the heavenly body.

14. **Spirit baptism takes place at the time of conversion, not at the time of water immersion.** The church at Jerusalem accepted that God had so worked (Acts 11:15-17), acknowledged that God had granted repentance unto life (Acts 11:18) and that Peter and the six Jewish believers with him were right in then immersing them in water. As many in Galatia as have been baptized into Christ have done so "by faith" (Gal 3:26-27). If it is by faith and not by works, it is clearly not accomplished by being immersed nor by any other physical actions or accomplishments. Faith is receiving, not achieving.

As considered earlier, exceptions at Ephesus (Acts 19:5-6) and Samaria (Acts 8:12-24) appear to be clearly set forth as exceptions. There was revelational purpose in the different manner employed by God. Exceptions, so it is said, do not change rules; they further establish the rules. The miracle of Jesus and Peter walking on water (Matt 14:25-29) further established the regular pattern that no man can walk on water. The teaching of the NT is that Spirit baptism takes place at the time of conversion, not at the time of water immersion.

15. **Spirit baptism should be followed by the symbolism of water immersion.** Obedience to the Lord was obvious to Peter; clearly no man could forbid (Acts 10:44-48). Paul considered that all believers at Corinth were immersed in water in the name of the Lord Jesus, even though he himself had immersed only a few of them (I Cor 1:12-17). Paul and Silas immersed all in the house of the Philippian jailor for all had believed in God (Acts 16:30-34). Disciples were commanded to make converts and immerse them (Matt 28:19). No record of deliberate disobedience or of failure to do so is recorded of any disciple in the NT. The disciples commanded believers to be immersed; there is no hint of failure to obey by any true believer. The Apostles traveled in all directions of the globe as they went forth preaching the Gospel. There is no suggestion anywhere that any of them failed to immerse converts.

The Bible does not teach that Spirit baptism is all that is necessary and thus water baptism is unnecessary. From predictions by John through explanations by Paul and Peter, Spirit baptism was exalted and water baptism was observed. The "dry Baptist" is neither a baptist (not an immerser) nor true to the NT pattern. Man does not baptize by the Spirit; only God does. Whenever God has baptized by the Spirit, man should immerse in water. Since Pentecost, the symbol follows the reality.

16. Water baptism is commanded; Spirit baptism is God's work. Peter preached, "Repent and be baptized (immersed) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (*eis*, because of, on the basis of, with respect to) remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Water immersion did not bring about remission of sin anymore than repentance brought about preaching by Jonah: "they repented at (*eis*, because of) the preaching of Jonas" (Matt 12:41). Converts in the house of Cornelius were immersed in water (Acts 10:47). Water applied by men can serve only to the putting away of the filth of the flesh (I Pet 3:21). Spirit baptism can only be by the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine accomplishing agent being the Holy Spirit. The uniting into the body of Christ is a judicial work in the courts of heaven. It is totally the work of God, not of men.

17. Spirit baptism is the reality which water baptism pictures. In the multiform emphases of Scripture, water immersion publicly portrays the physical death and physical resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (30 AD). Water immersion also portrays the union of each believer in Christ, positionally benefiting from His death and resurrection and practically benefiting by personal death to sin and being "quickened" (made alive) unto newness of life (Rom 6:3-4). Each believer at conversion is immersed "into Jesus Christ" (Rom 6:3). All believers have been immersed "into one body" (I Cor 12:13). Where there is clear evidence of this union, manifest in regeneration, presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, control of the Holy Spirit, can any man forbid water (Acts 10:47)? Water immersion is an ordinance only in this dispensation because it pictures a spirit immersion which occurs only in this dispensation.

Paul proclaimed, "There is one body, and Spirit, . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism (immersion), one God" (Eph 4:4-6). The one immersion of true believers into the one body of Jesus Christ is the only such work. There is only one such work of immersing the believer into the body of the Lord Jesus, and God has appointed an important means of portraying that spiritual fact--the physical symbol of water immersion. God used the analogy of a physical body to enable comprehension of the special result of Spirit baptism. God employed

analogies from the function of local churches (I Cor 12:14-27; Rom 12:4-8) to aid believers in comprehending the very special work of assembling a body of Christ throughout this dispensation.

Appointed figures are real. Moses raised a material likeness of a serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14; Num 21:8-9). Those bitten were to look unto the serpent of brass. John introduced an immersion into H<sub>2</sub>O water. As the Gospel spread, all believers were immersed in water. They were also, God declares, made one in the body of Christ, the reality portrayed by immersion in water.

The amount of water involved in water immersion is not significant so long as it is enough to immerse (see the preference of "much water there," John 3:23). That the dunking is of such a nature as could remove filth of the flesh (I Pet 3:21) is basic to the figure. But it is the work of the Spirit that is important. Looking forward as John the Baptist did or looking back as a believer does today, Spirit baptism is the reality predicted or portrayed by water immersion.

18. **Newness of life is an outward witness of an inner reality.** "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death . . . that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3-4). Those in the house of Cornelius manifest the indwelling and control of the Spirit, thus water baptism should be observed (Acts 10:46-47). Paul knew that true converts, whether he had personally observed them or not, were baptized by the Spirit (Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12; Gal 3:27; I Cor 12:13). If a man manifests the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Scripture declares he has been made one in the body of Christ by agency of the Holy Spirit.

Paul frequently used the ordinance of water immersion to portray Spirit baptism. Those at Rome, Corinth, Colosse and in Galatia had been immersed in water. That was not lacking in Paul's ministry. But the symbol was not as important as the reality pictured in the appointed symbolism. Believers at Rome and Colosse had been united into the body of Christ by Spirit action; they had a means of comprehending that reality through the public portrayal introduced by John and observed wherever the Gospel was obeyed. Coming up out of the water proclaimed the physical resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the newness of Life begun in the life of the believer, and the certainty of future physical resurrection to enable full participation as a member of the prospective heavenly gathering of all believers of this age as the body of Christ. Each believer has now an earnest of the fullness of his salvation.

19. Spirit baptism is judicial in nature, not experiential, that is, its accomplishment is in judicial courts in heaven, not here on the earth. The fiction of belonging to a universal church does not at all fit the pattern of the New Testament. New Testament believers were immersed in water on this globe, not in heavenly places. They partook of the Lord's Table in local congregations. They brought their tithes and offerings on the first day of the week to a local assembly.

This is not to say that present union in the body of Christ is fiction rather than fact. The body became real at Pentecost, but will not be complete until the gathering following the rapture. Each believer is already a member helping to make up the full body, but that body is not yet functioning as a body. Each local church is a miniature body (microcosm) providing comprehension of the greater future body (macrocosm). Activity in Christ in this world is not to be independent activity by single members but interrelated activity in a functioning unit of the present world.

20. Spirit baptism is an identification not an association. The members of a body are interrelated (I Cor 12:15-21). Members of a local congregation are associated together for worship, fellowship, and service. They constitute a unit in God's reckoning, but believers in local congregations are not made one in the sense of husband-wife, Christ-church oneness (Eph 5:32). Each believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit; his body is a temple, a dwelling place (I Cor 6:19). Each local church similarly experiences a special indwelling of the Holy Spirit; each congregation is a temple in which the Spirit of God dwells (I Cor 3:16-17). Each local assembly is treated by God as a unit, but the union is one of fellowship and activity. The schism to be avoided in the local body (I Cor 12:25) will not be possible in the heavenly gathering of the full body.

Each believer at conversion is immersed into the body of Christ. This judicial placement is called "identification," making one, causing to be identical. Unfortunately a colloquial usage of "identify" is often understood instead of the theological usage. To be identical is to be exactly the same. To identify is to make or to be the same, to consider as the same. The colloquial (conversational) usage may indicate no more than association, as for instance in relation to a social or political group. Spirit baptism does not speak of alignment or agreement; it has to do with oneness, a special identity, a placing of or reckoning of all believers of this dispensation as one body of Christ.

It is properly said that the only difference between the baptism of John and water immersion since Pentecost is identification. This is but another way of saying that immersion prior to Pentecost was prophecy,

anticipating fulfillment; water immersions since Pentecost are memorials, public recollections of history, of past fact. Looking forward at the time John's disciples immersed, the ordinance could portray death and resurrection and allow for the concept of union of believers with Christ in that death and resurrection. That such union would also include being made one in Christ (identification) was a truth reserved for clarification following the historical occurrence. All believers of all ages are represented in the substitutionary death of the Lamb. Only believers of this church age are judicially declared one in Christ in the figure of a body with Christ as head. This special alignment is distinct from regeneration and from fellowship; believers have been made one in Christ, identical with Christ for God's purpose.

No believer can say, "I am Jesus" nor "I am of the same eternal nature as Jesus." Every believer in this dispensation can and should recognize that he has been judicially reckoned to be one in a special body of unique oneness in Christ Jesus. Only one Israelite at the crossing of the sea on dry land could say, "I am Moses." But all others were made one with Moses in a unit for special deliverance by God. That unit was a unit of association, not of identification. "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto (*eis*) Moses in (*en*) the cloud and in (*en*) the sea" (I Cor 10:1-2). Moisture immersion is clear. Formation of a distinct body by immersion is the significant use to note. They were immersed into Moses. That body was in connection with physical deliverance. The body of unique identification in Christ is unto eternal glory.

21. **Spirit baptism is not so much a greater work of the Holy Spirit as it is a different work.** Spirit immersion is far greater than water immersion, but it is not to be considered greater than indwelling, filling, etc. Spirit baptism as a distinct endeavor is a uniting of believers of this dispensation in a fashion different from any other groupings mentioned in Scripture.

Scripture indicates other groupings in heaven. These which "came out of great tribulation" (Rev 7:14) appear as a separate, distinct group before the Throne. The Malachi remnant will be honored by God above other Old Testament saints (Mal 3:17). The full body of Christ will have an assigned honored place in God's appointment for service in eternity, but everyone in heaven will be in a position of glory. The body of the saints of this dispensation will be distinct and exalted, but very much in the same sense that every grouping will be honored and exalted by the grace of God. In the British military, the Queen's regiment enjoys the special honor of bearing the monarch's title but functions much as all other regiments function.

The importance of the spirit oneness of the body of Jesus Christ is a marvelous fulfillment of extensive preparation. God for centuries had dealt with one nation in order to reach out and into every nation of the globe. Jesus emphasized, "The law and the prophets were until John" (Luke 16:16). The great coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost included not only the work of Spirit baptism, but a permanent indwelling, a sealing, a leading into all truth, a boldness in witnessing. Spiritual activity following Pentecost has a new horizon: the ends of the earth. It also has intense vitality. Spirit baptism is but one of many works of the Holy Spirit intensified or introduced at Pentecost. Each work is important. As "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet 1:21) they performed an important work. As John preached and immersed, he performed an important work. One is not more important than another. Similarly, Spirit baptism is not to be conceived as a greater work of the Holy Spirit but as a different work.

22. **The Holy Spirit performs only one kind of baptism.** There are not different Spirit baptisms in different dispensations, nor is there more than one kind of Spirit baptism in this dispensation. There is "one body, and one Spirit" (Eph 4:4). There is "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph 4:5). Water immersion is not a second immersion. There is but one divinely gathered body of Christ, but one Spirit immersion actively forming that body. What man does as an agent in water immersion has been appointed to help comprehend that magnificent work but in no sense constitutes a second baptism. There is only one divine activity of placement into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. No human activity accomplishes this oneness.

### Observations

This concluding section endeavors to evaluate certain objections which have frequently been expressed, again only briefly, not in detail.

1. Some have reacted that regarding Spirit baptism as a special work of forming a special body instead of regarding the indwelling and filling at Pentecost as fulfillment of Spirit baptism is to emphasize something quite insignificant to the detriment of an event centrally significant. Instead of exalting redemption, they suggest, this view engenders dissension by promoting distinct groupings in heaven. Two answers may be quickly set forth.

As one answer, if God teaches it, we should accept it. Truth is not what we consider to be important but what God declares to be so. As a second answer, if God considers it to be a worthy purpose, we should

hold high what God holds high. Baptismal formation into a glorious body of Christ including all believers, Jewish or Gentile from Pentecost to the rapture, is a marvelous work of the holy God.

Some view God's work as primarily soteriological (saving men) instead of doxological (glorifying God). As an analogy, God imputing righteousness to Abraham is significant; God's calling Abraham for the formation of a nation is secondary. Rather, all God chooses to do is important. Spirit baptism is not an insignificant part of revelation.

2. Some feel that emphasis on Spirit baptism lessens the importance of water baptism. That should never be the case, but rather the opposite should characterize all who accept water immersion as an appointed ordinance.

3. Some react that recognition of the reality of a greater body of Christ detracts from the primacy of the local church. Frequency of occurrence in the NT answers this. Of over one hundred references using the word church (*ekklesia*) some ninety are local in nature. Only a few passages refer to the greater church which is being formed by Spirit baptism.

4. Some consider that if each believer is already in the body of Jesus spiritual obligations are in relation to that body and not to any body of believers solely on earth. A simple answer is that heavenly activity is not possible until a believer gets to heaven. Meanwhile, the clear teaching of the NT is that believers are not to forsake the assembling (Heb 10:25). One who shows disrespect for water immersion manifests thereby a disdain for that which water immersion was appointed to portray, Spirit baptism. One who shows disrespect for local bodies of Christ manifests thereby disdain for the greater body of Christ, the macrocosm which the microcosm portrays.

5. Some judge that a full (different) doctrine is built from but a few passages which perhaps might be interpreted in a different way. One response is that a simple, straight-forward, literal interpretation is to be preferred. Another response is that the doctrine of the dispensational forming of a distinct body results from investigation of three areas, not from just one or a few verses. This survey has considered Spirit immersion; equally important are studies of the word church (*ekklesia*) and the phrase "in Christ" which occurs some one hundred fifty times in the NT. Thus word studies and systematic studies (from God's revelation of Himself and His work) plus dispensational studies (God's varying methods of working among men) combine to make firm the teaching that God's special formative endeavor in this era is the making one of all believers into an eternal spiritual body, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Three messages of John the Baptist were important. That the Lamb would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36) is important to all men of all ages. That the kingdom of heaven is at hand in the appearance of the Messiah King is important for physical sons of Abraham. That the Son of God will baptize in fire inextinguishable should warn unsaved of all ages. That He would baptize with the Holy Ghost has special encouragement for all saints of this dispensation. An exalted identification in the one great body of which Christ is the head is a present reality, with full function of that completed body to follow worlds without end.