

## **THE BAPTISM AND GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Nowhere in biblical theology is there greater need for precise statement of vital truth than with the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit. But what are the reasons for misconception and misstatement? Where does the confusion arise? These questions are pertinent and touch at the heart of the matter.

### **WHAT THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT**

#### **1. THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT IS NOT THE NEW BIRTH.**

Although in this present age of grace regeneration and the baptism with the Spirit are always simultaneous—so that everyone who is regenerated is at the same time baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Yet the two operations are distinct. They must not be confused as one operation. Campbell Morgan fails to make the necessary distinction when he writes: "The baptism of the Spirit is the primary blessing; it is in short, the blessing of regeneration."

However, a careful consideration will show that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not regeneration. The Spirit's baptizing work places the believer in Christ (Rom 6:3, 4; Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 2:12), whereas regeneration results in Christ in the believer (Jn 17:23; Col 1:27; Rev 3:20). Regeneration imparts life. The baptism with the Spirit unites the life-possessing one to Christ, and to those who possess life in Him. Did not Jesus, in His great upper room discourse, when uttering words prophetic of the Spirit's advent into the world at Pentecost, and His ministry during this present age, refer to a distinction between these two operations of the Spirit as ye in me and "I in you" (Jn 14:20)?

That the expression 'ye in me' plainly refers to the Spirit's baptizing the believer into Christ is evident from Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"; and from I Corinthians 12: 13 "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." There are, moreover, approximately 150 passages which state or imply that the believer is in Christ, and every one has reference to the Spirit's work in baptism, for that operation alone can put one in Christ.

That the phrase I in you refers to regeneration is apparent from 1 John 5:11, 12: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Regeneration means receiving spiritual life, that is, eternal life. Christ is this life (Jn 14:6). We only receive this life as we receive Christ, who then may be said to be in us, "the hope of glory" (Coil: 27).

The baptism with the Holy Spirit and regeneration are thus two complementary and yet distinct works of God, simultaneously and eternally accomplished in the believer

the moment he exercises saving faith in Christ. By regeneration the soul is quickened from death into life (Eph 2:1-5). By the Spirit's baptizing work the quickened soul is organically united to Christ as head (Eph 1:22, 23) and to all other believers as members of the one body (1 Cor 12:12-27). 'By regeneration the one exercising saving faith becomes a child of God (Jn 1:12, 13), is made a son in the Father's house (Gal 3:26), becomes a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), and is made an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ (Rom 8:16, 17). By the Spirit's baptizing work, the believing one is taken out of the old creation in Adam and placed eternally in the new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), the new federal head, and all that Christ is and has done is imputed to the believer. Our Saviour, in His words, "ye in me, and I in you," inseparably connects these two operations of the Spirit in this age but also carefully distinguishes them.

## **2. THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT IS NOT THE INFILLING OF THE SPIRIT.**

The uniform teaching of the epistles is that every believer in this age has the Spirit (Rom 5:5; 8:9; al 3:2; 4:6) and is indwelt continually by the Spirit (1 Cor 6:19, 20; Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 5:5; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13). The difference between the saved of this age and the unsaved is that all the saved have the Spirit indwelling them, while all the unsaved "have not the Spirit" (Jude 19). Like regeneration, the indwelling with the Spirit

during this age occurs simultaneously with the baptism with the Spirit and yet is a distinct ministry of the Spirit. It is impossible flow to be regenerated and not to be indwelt with the Spirit nor baptized with the Spirit. This ought not to surprise anyone who has given any serious thought to the breadth and complexity of that great work of God for the believer, which is described by the very general term salvation. This is the great inclusive word of the gospel and embraces the sweep of divine undertakings from our redemption from sin in the past to our complete glorification in the future. The late Lewis Sperry Chafer lists some thirty-three distinct positions and possessions into which one who is saved is ushered the very moment he exercises faith. Regeneration, baptism, and indwelling are accomplished for the believer at the instant he believes. They form the structure of his salvation and are never annulled; thus they never need to be repeated.

## **3. The Baptism Of The Spirit Is Not The Sealing Of The Spirit.**

The sealing is a distinct operation of the Spirit but occurs simultaneously with regeneration, baptism, and indwelling. Every child of God has been sealed with the Spirit unto the time of full redemption and glorification of the body (Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22), and also anointed with the Spirit (2 Cor 1:21; 1 Jn 2:20, 27). The Spirit, as the indweller, is the seal. The figure of the seal speaks of the stamp of the divine ownership as a result of the new creation in Christ Jesus, and it is the badge of eternal security. Those whom God stamps as His own, He pledges to keep as His own.

By regeneration He gives us His own life. By the Spirit's baptism He unites us indissolubly and vitally to Himself. By the indwelling He grants us His continual presence. By the sealing He stamps us as His very own for all eternity. By the anointing He consecrates us to a holy life and service. God's work is always perfect and complete.

#### **4. The Baptism Of The Spirit Is NOT A Second Blessing.**

Many modern holiness movements and old-line Pentecostals from 1900 on and Neo-Pentecostals since 1950 are guilty of this fatal blunder. Absolutely essential time distinctions are completely ignored and are even looked upon hostilely as subtle human reasonings and positive Satanic inventions to shut out the power of God. The baptism of Jesus is distorted to teach a second definite experience in the life of our Saviour, a so-called baptism of Christ's human nature with the Holy Spirit before entering upon His ministry. The transitional nature of the period in which the apostles lived is completely disregarded, and they are viewed as regenerated before Pentecost, and what happened on that day is explained as a second experience, the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The confusion proceeds. The Samaritan disciples (Ac 8) are regarded as regenerated under Philip's preaching, and later baptized with the Holy Spirit as a second definite experience under Peter and John's ministry. Paul is said to have been regenerated on the road to Damascus, and subsequently baptized with the Spirit as a second definite experience when Ananias laid his hands on him, and he was filled with the Spirit (Ac 9). Likewise Cornelius is strangely represented as saved before Peter's arrival (but see Ac 11:14) and baptized with the Spirit as a second experience in the course of Peter's sermon (Ac 10).

In like manner the Ephesian disciples (Ac 19) are confidently affirmed to have been genuine New Testament believers before they met Paul, and their receiving the Holy Spirit was their baptism with the Spirit as a second definite experience. Deeper experiences of famous Christians down through the centuries are misconstrued as second definite experiences after regeneration.

In many instances promoters of these unsound doctrines make no attempt to reconcile their teaching of a second definite experience gleaned from the gospels and the Acts with the clear-cut teaching of the epistles, namely, that all believers in this age have the Holy Spirit and are regenerated, baptized, indwelt, anointed, and sealed as God's own forever, the moment saving faith is exercised.

Some, making a serious effort to interpret Acts in the light of the doctrinal epistles, teach that 1 Corinthians 12:13 is a so-called baptism of repentance, which results in salvation in distinction to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, a subsequent experience for power. Thus two spiritual baptisms are posited for this age, and this in the face of Paul's emphatic testimony. "one [spiritual] baptism" (Eph 4:5). Others, comparing the doctrine of the epistles with the historical portions, cannot get beyond the erroneous notion of "two classes of passages" in the former, which are accordingly twisted to fit the mold of error, drawn out of an inaccurate and nondispensational interpretation of the latter. Yet

others, teaching that a person may or may not be baptized with the Spirit “the moment he is regenerated,” apparently do not realize how contrary such a position is to the epistles.

Misunderstanding of Spirit baptism has led multitudes of present-day believers to great lengths. This is especially so since 1950 when Pentecostal revivalism began to overflow the confines of old-line Pentecostalism and, in the Neo-Pentecostal movement, began to inundate practically all Protestant denominations and Roman Catholicism. As a result, confusion is widespread. Christians are urged to seek the Holy Spirit, to tarry for their Pentecost. One group preaches to believers a twofold step to the Spirit’s baptism. First, a step of entire surrender. Second, a definite reception of the Holy Spirit “by faith.” Another denomination insists on a supernatural speaking in tongues as the evidence of what they call the baptism with the Spirit. Another large group considers speaking in a charismatic language as the evidence of the new birth, which is made synonymous with the baptism with the Spirit.

Other groups interpret the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit as an experience of perfect holiness, and fall into the mistaken notion of sinless perfection and eradicationism. All-in viewing the Spirit’s baptizing work as a second blessing or second work of grace for the believer-necessarily cast a reflection on the completeness of the first work of grace, in which Christ, in all His fullness, becomes the portion of the believer the moment he is saved. A great barrier is erected against the glorious truth of the safety and security of the believer the instant the scriptural truth of the baptism with the Spirit is distorted or mutilated. This is obvious since the Scriptures represent us as in Christ, in indissoluble and eternal union by the Spirit’s baptizing work.

## **5. The baptism of the Spirit is not the filling of the Spirit.**

It is a common practice among Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals to identify the baptism of the Spirit with the filling of the Spirit. “To be Pentecostal,” declares Ernest Williams, “is to identify oneself with the experience that came to Christ’s followers on the day of Pentecost, that is, to be filled with the Holy Spirit in the same manner as those who were filled with the Holy Spirit on that occasion.”

That the two operations of the Spirit, so frequently con-founded, are not the same is evident from a number of emphatic scriptural contrasts.

First, the baptizing work of the Spirit is a once-for-all operation, whereas the filling with the Spirit is a continuous process. One baptism for the believer is in contrast to the many in-fillings. The one baptism puts the believer “in Christ” (Rom 6:3, 4; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12), into His body (1 Cor 12:13), and therefore brings the believing one into an eternal position, which is unalterable and immutable, having the finality of God’s own unchangeable nature, of which the believer becomes partaker (2 Pet 1:4). Since this position in Christ is unchangeable and eternal, the baptizing work of the Spirit is not repeat-able, as there is not the least occasion for its being repeated. One in Christ positionally can never again through all eternity be out of Christ positionally, as that position depends wholly upon the efficacy of the finished redemptive work of God’s Son, and does not hinge upon human merit or faithfulness. Accordingly, the baptism with the

Spirit is never said to be repeated, nor indeed can be. However, it does effect positional fullness, the completeness with which God views the believer, because it places the believer in Christ, in whom all fullness dwells (Col 2:9-10). As a result, the believer shares that spiritual fullness and is complete in Christ when saved.

Nonexperiential (positional) fullness, moreover, is the ground of experiential fullness, which is the actual repeatable filling with the Spirit (Ac 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17). By faith the believer reckons on his positional fullness as his heritage in union with Christ. As he believes he is what he is in Christ, his position becomes real in his experience (Rom 6:11).

Accordingly, the baptism of the Spirit effects union with Christ and positional fullness. It makes possible the filling, but emphatically it is not the experience of the filling itself. The baptizing work of the Spirit is nonexperiential, whereas the filling with the Spirit is experiential. The baptism with the Spirit is not an experience. It does not affect the believer's senses. Like the spiritual (positional) fullness it effects by bringing the believer into the sphere of spiritual blessing, it is not felt. Placing the believer in Christ, it constitutes his initiation into the Christian life but plays no part in his subsequent experience, except as it forms the basis of his experience of his exalted position in Christ (Eph 1:3).

The filling with the Spirit, in contrast to the baptism of the Spirit, is a very definite experience. It radically affects Christian life and service. It produces Christian character in the ninefold fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23). It produces power for testimony (Ac 1:8), boldness for witnessing (Ac 4:31), victory over the flesh (Gal 5:16), exercise of gifts (1 Cor 12:4-31). It results in the Spirit's teaching (Jn 16:13~q 1 Jn 2:27), true praise and worship (Eph 5:18-20), guidance (Rom 8:14), effective prayer (Rom 8:27), etc. The filling with the Spirit produces normal Christian experience; and continual filling is necessary to maintain the norm.

There is no command for anyone to be baptized with the Spirit, but there is a distinct injunction for every believer to be filled with the Spirit. The unequivocal declaration of Scripture (1 Cor 12:13) is that all believers "were baptized by one Spirit into one body." No command appears for the simple reason that it is an absolute impossibility to be a Christian at all in this age and not be baptized with the Spirit! The admonition to be filled continually is outspoken and emphatic. "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18). These words also indicate that it is possible for a believer not to be filled. The present tense of the verb in the imperative denotes a "continuous or repeated" action so that the meaning is "keep on being filled," or "be constantly filled." Thus is expressed the constant duty and obligation of the believer and thus is emphasized the contrast between the once-for-all nature of the Spirit's work in baptizing, and the continuous and oft-recurring nature of His work in filling.

The baptizing work of the Spirit is universal among Christians, whereas the filling with the Spirit is not. All Christians are so baptized, without a single exception (1 Cor 12:13), even the carnal or fleshly, and the babes in Christ (1 Cor 3:1-3), even those who may have fallen into sin (1 Cor 5:1-10), and all so baptized are thereby positionally

justified and sanctified (1 Cor 1:2; 6:11), being “saints” (1 Cor 1:2). That all are not filled with the Spirit is obvious from the carnal state of the Corinthian believers, who are “all” yet said to have been baptized with the Spirit. It may then be said that all Christians are baptized with the Spirit, but all are not filled, although all ought to be filled, and that constantly. Believers who habitually live the Spirit-filled life are de-scribed as “full” (an adjective) of the Holy Spirit (Ac 6:3; 7:55; 11:24). When the precise action of Infilling is in view the verb is used (Ac2:4;4:8,31;9:17;13:9,52;Eph5:18).

The baptizing work of the Spirit is totally different from the filling with the Spirit in its results. Being nonexperiential, as noted, as over against the filling, which is experiential, it concerns the standing or position of the believer, whereas the filling concerns his state or walk. It results, accordingly, in the believer’s exalted standing before God, which is the result of the work of Christ, and is perfect and entire from the very moment saving faith is exercised in Christ. Nothing in the subsequent life of the believer can ever, even in the smallest degree, add to, or subtract from his title to God’s favor, nor to his perfect security.

The baptizing work of the Spirit, putting the believing one in Christ, alone confers standing in God’s sight and gives the weakest, most ignorant man on earth, the moment he believes the same position as the most illustrious saint (Jn 1: t2~¶ Rom 8:17;Eph1:6,11;2:4-6;5:30;IPel:4,5;C012:10). What the actual state of such a one may be, is quite a different matter. Certainly it must be thought of as far below his exalted standing before God.

It is by the filling with the Spirit that the believer is enabled to maintain a state worthy of his standing (Eph 4:1-3; Rom 12:3-21). Positional sanctification, which is the result of the Spirit’s baptizing work, is accompanied by progressive or experiential sanctification, as a result of the Spirit’s work in filling. As C. I. Scofield aptly remarks: “The divine order, under grace, is first to give the highest possible standing, and then to exhort the believer to maintain a state in accordance therewith.

The beggar is lifted up from the dunghill and set among princes (I Sam. 2:8), and then exhorted to be princely.”

It is to be noted that not only the baptizing work of the Spirit, but His regenerating, indwelling, and sealing are included under the term gift or free gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The salvation which He works in us is also said to be a free gift (Eph 2:8-10), a gift of grace, (Rom 6:23), that is, “a favor which one receives without any merit of his own.” Thus the baptizing work of the Spirit with the spiritual fullness it effects by placing all believers “in Christ” is associated with God’s free gift of salvation. The filling with the Spirit, on the other hand, while based on spiritual fullness provided in salvation, is to be connected with rewards, which are to be given to believers for faithfulness in service after receiving God’s free gift of salvation (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Jn 8).

In proportion as the believer walks by means of the Spirit (Gal 5:16), being continually filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18), will he be enabled to fulfill all God’s plan for his life, in carrying out the program of good works for which he is saved (Eph 2:10), and thus receive a full reward (2 Jn 8).

The baptizing work of the Spirit is different from the filling with the Spirit in the conditions upon which it is received. Since it is a vital and integral part of salvation, together with the spiritual fullness it effects in Christ, simple faith in Christ as Saviour from the penalty of sin is the only requirement. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and Thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). “Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16).

But the filling of the Spirit is also the experience and the expression of salvation, not something in addition to it. Hence, actually from the divine side, the filling, like the baptism, has only one condition—that of simple faith. However, the faith is not that of the unsaved person believing that Christ died for him. It is by contrast the faith of the saint (the saved person) believing that he died in Christ to sin and self (Rom 5:6-8) that he might live unto God and righteousness (Rom 6:1-11).

The New Testament bears clear testimony that being filled with the Spirit is not a matter of legalistically meeting certain human prerequisites such as yieldedness (Rom 6:13, 19; 12:1-2), confession of (1 Jn 1:9) and separation from sin (2 Cor 6:1-2). These and other so-called conditions (made so much of in charismatic circles) are valid on/y as expressions of faith in what Christ has done for us and what we are in Him. Never are they valid as works we do for God to merit His great salvation, or any experience or expression of it.

## 6. THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT IS NOT WATER BAPTISM.

One extreme position erroneously views Spirit baptism as a once-for-all operation at Pentecost (Acts 2) and in Cornelius' house (Acts 10), and maintains that then it ceased. During this present age, it is contended, there is no baptism with the Holy Spirit. First Corinthians 12:13 is construed as referring back to these events. Such scriptures as Romans 6:3,4; Colosians 2:12; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21, are made to refer exclusively to water baptism. The “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5 is also asserted to be water baptism alone.

M. Haldeman, adopting this position, comments thus on Ephesians 4:5: “If it be Holy Ghost baptism, water baptism is excluded. There is no authority, no place for it. No minister has a right to perform it; no one is under obligation to submit to it. To perform it, or submit to it, would be not only without authority, but useless, utterly meaningless. If it be water baptism, Holy Ghost baptism is no longer operative. Baptism must be either the one or the other, Holy Ghost or water. It cannot be both. Two are no longer permissible.”

Others adopting the opposite extreme position, while rightly insisting that Ephesians 4:5 refers to Spirit baptism, drastically rule out any practice of water baptism for the church age. Although they find ritual baptism, of course, regularly practiced in the early church (Ac 2:38; 8:12, 13, 16, 36; 9:18; 10:47, 48; 16:15,33; 18:8; 19:3-5) and mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:13-17, this practice is thought to be confined to the early so-called Jewish church, and discontinued by the apostle Paul, when the alleged real New Testament church began late in the book of Acts.

This position must be rejected. The basic fact, which is ignored, is that the church actually began with the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Ac 1:4, 5; 2:47, with 11:16; 1 Cor 12:13), and that water baptism, which in the new dispensation was to become the symbol of Spirit baptism, was regularly administered, not only in the so-called Jewish church, but also long after in fully established Gentile churches (Ac 18:8; 1 Cor 1:13-17). It was fitting, too, that water baptism should become a visible portrayal of that all-important invisible operation of the Holy Spirit that places the believer in union with Christ (Rom 6:3, 4) and with His body, the church (1 Cor 12:13). It attached unifying and instructive significance to the water ceremony thus to focus its meaning upon the believer's oneness with his Lord and with all other believers in Him. Water baptism could be viewed as a visible symbol of the Holy Spirit's work of baptizing the believer into Christ either as the cause or means effecting that glorious union or as the result or effect of that union in the believer's life.

In the former case the application of water by sprinkling or pouring is viewed as the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the recipient to effect His baptizing work. In the latter case the immersion of the believer in water is interpreted as visibly symbolizing the believer's union with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection. This position views water baptism as only validly Christian when it is preceded by Spirit baptism.

The apostle, in speaking of the "one baptism" in Ephesians 4:5, is speaking of Spirit baptism, which is likewise the case in Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12; and Galatians 3:27. But when he describes this momentous operation of the Spirit as the one baptism and as one of the seven essential unities to be recognized and kept in maintaining Christian oneness and accord, he is certainly not implying that water baptism is no longer to be administered. He is merely saying, "There is only one [spiritual] baptism." Although his theme is no more water baptism in Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12; and Galatians 3:27 than in Ephesians 4:5, it must be remembered that in any reference to Spirit baptism the ritual symbol is always behind the spiritual reality, and these passages are no exception.

Therefore, although the apostle is not considering ritual but real baptism, the context of the argument and the exalted nature of the spiritual realities taught strongly supporting this view, nevertheless water baptism as a practice for this age cannot validly be said to be ruled out by these passages.

On the other hand, however, it is to be feared that man in displacing Spirit baptism by water baptism in these sublime passages has put them into ecclesiastical racks and tortured and twisted them until they have screamed out some confession never written in them. To be sure, this torturous process began very early, doubtless within the lifetime of the apostle, for man is always keenly tempted to substitute ritual for reality in things spiritual. But it is difficult to see how a first-century reader, especially one who had sat under the teaching of the great apostle of grace, had listened to his magnificent expositions of the believer's position of union with Christ by the Spirit's baptizing work and had noted his rigid practice of putting the ritual strictly in its proper place of subordination (1 Cor 1:14-17), would have imagined that in these sublime Scriptures

setting forth tremendous spiritual realities of the believer's in-Christ position Paul would be dealing with a mere ceremony.

It is difficult also on the basis of biblical, historical, and philological consideration to see how a first-century reader would have construed the baptism of Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27; and Ephesians 4:5 as water baptism. Could a mere water ceremony affect the vast spiritual transaction comprehended in being placed "in Christ"? Valid Christian baptism (the water ceremony) performed upon a true believer can and does portray Spirit baptism, which has already taken place in the believer's life. But the ritual ceremony is only in the background, never in the foreground. It is the reality that is the subject of these passages, not the ritual symbolism that underlies it.

Many Christian scholars, however, are persuaded that a particular mode of baptism cannot be deduced from the terms death, burial, and resurrection contained in these passages. Baptism, referring to the Levitical ceremonies of the Old Testament (Heb 9:10), it is maintained, had come to have a wide meaning of "ceremonial cleansing, or ritual purification by water, and that by sprinkling or pouring," centuries before the Christian era.

Edmund Fairfield illustrates this established biblical usage of the term baptize (baptizo) from the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, Josephus, and the Greek New Testament. James W Dale has researched the subject of water baptism among the ancient Jews. He concludes his extensive researches with this summary statement: "Judaic baptism is a condition of Ceremonial Purification effected by washing . . . sprinkling pouring dependent in no wise on any form of act, or on the covering of the Dale summarizes his detailed work on the study of John the Baptist's baptism with these words: "This same baptism is declared by word and exhibited in symbol, by the application of pure water to the person in the ritual ordinance. This is Johannic Baptism in its shadow. Dipping or immersing in water is phraseology utterly unknown to John's baptism."

Biblical, historical, and philological evidence, therefore is not lacking that John the Baptist "ceremonially purified" (baptized) by sprinkling or pouring, that Jesus was so baptized (consecrated) to His priesthood (Ex 29:4; Ps 110:1; Mt3:15; Heb 7-9), and that Jewish and Christian baptism knew no other mode.

Whatever mode of baptism may be employed, however, let no one suppose because water baptism is not the apostle's subject in Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27, and Ephesians 4:5, except of course, as the symbol always underlies the reality, that therefore there is no longer any warrant for the practice of ritual baptism in the church age. With water baptism practiced in the early church, as noted, even to a late date among believers of purely Gentile background, to posit no water baptism for this dispensation on the basis of the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5 is an extreme position, unwarranted by all the facts of the case. That which is not the subject of this passage cannot be said to be eliminated by the scope of the passage. The apostle simply does not have ritual baptism in mind in these words, as the context plainly intimates, and hence they do not deal with the practice or nonpractice of the rite in this age.

## **WHAT MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT LEADS TO**

This whole theme is far from being a mere discussion of words. It is a sad spectacle to see the widespread havoc wrought in the church of Christ the world over by miscomprehension of Spirit baptism. Confusion has steadily increased, especially since the rise of the Neo-Pentecostal or charismatic trend since 1950. Crossing the confines of the older Pentecostal denominations, this trend has overflowed into practically every Protestant group and Roman Catholicism, furnishing the basis for new errors to trouble the peace and doctrinal purity of the church.-“ Destructive and dangerous results of this prevailing condition are not difficult to discover.

This misunderstanding leads to divisions and lamentable confusion among God’s people. Multitudes of believers seeking some experience not authorized by the Word of God have imagined themselves to have received some special benefit some peculiar blessing, placing them above their brethren. Error has ministered to empty spiritual pride. Disruptions and separations have flourished like weeds in rank soil of spiritual arrogance. Churches have been split, believers divided.

The believer’s union with Christ is obscured, as well as his oneness with all other believers in Christ. *Instead of one body formed by one spiritual baptism (1 Cor 12:13), two bodies emerge, the inevitable result of two spiritual baptisms. One body is conceived as consisting of ordinary believers. The other as Spirit-baptized super-saints.* Pride tends to engender animosities and divisions. True unity in Christ is sacrificed to a false unity in an alleged deeper experience of the Holy Spirit. Christian brother is, accordingly, separated from Christian brother. The true oneness of God’s people is thus imperilled.

Other believers have sought an experience of tongues or eradication of the old nature, and have fallen into many types of excess and fanaticism. That confusion of Spirit baptism with water baptism is the source of endless bitter controversy and denominational prejudice is well known to everybody.

## **THIS MISUNDERSTANDING OBSCURES THE GOSPEL OF GRACE.**

Someone will say that it matters very little so long as the promulgators of these misleading doctrines preach the gospel. The question is, however, how can anyone preach the gospel of the grace of God, while continually misrepresenting the teaching of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit? What the gospel really is and what a multitude of uninstructed people are willing to call the gospel is quite a different thing.

L. S. Chafer’s comment on this point is very pertinent: “Where do the leaders of these great errors ever declare that God, impelled by infinite love and acting in sovereign grace and on the ground of the absoluteness of the finished work of Christ, does save the chief

of sinners eternally on no other condition than that he believe? Do they preach that being found in Christ every human merit and demerit, in the divine reckoning, passed; and the one who believes is so transferred to the perfect merit of Christ that he will never perish, but will endure as Christ endures? The preaching of the Gospel of Grace consists in the proclamation of these eternal glories, and apart from these announcements, there is no gospel.”

**FURTHER, THIS MISUNDERSTANDING PERVERTS THE TRUTH OF THE BELIEVER’S UNION WITH CHRIST.**

Oneness with Christ forms the only basis on which the believer can rest assured of any eternal standing before God. Little wonder teachers of these errors give no assurance of the security of the believer and of his unforfeitable position in Christ. Little wonder Christians, embracing these doctrines, doubt their salvation, or that they even have the Spirit,” or that they are “sealed with the Spirit.” Little wonder, then, Satan delights in these vagaries, since they deprive the believer of all security, rest, and joy in realization of union with Christ.

**FINALLY, THIS MISUNDERSTANDING HINDERS A HOLY WALK IN THE BELIEVER.**

It robs him of the chief incentive to such a walk, namely, an unobscured conception of his positions and possessions in Christ. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above” (Col 3:1). This is the true dynamic for a holy life. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the champions of these errors, while obscuring the genuine scriptural impulse to holiness, dragging in legalistic prohibitions and the bugbear of insecurity to frighten the believer into sanctity of life and to bolster up ebbing spirituality.

Who can ever estimate the vast amount of harm, which has resulted from these misleading conceptions of truth? These errors threaten the very essence of the gospel message. Confusion in many quarters is appalling. The problem to state accurately the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit from the scriptural records, and to preach and teach it uncompromisingly, is one of the pressing needs of the hour.