

ONE FROM THE HEART

Baptised - Water or Spirit?

We have been seeing a lot of baptisms lately – I think it is 60 in the last four weeks! God has been doing a beautiful and powerful work in people's lives. We have sensed the moving of God's Spirit amongst us in recent weeks and have been hearing the testimony of how God is at work in bringing people to salvation, healing people, birthing a new hunger and desire to prioritise the things of God.

Peter and John – Acts 3 & 4

They knew what their assignment was. They knew what God was capable of. They knew that they were empowered by God's Spirit, and they wanted to use their anointing to boldly speak the word of God to others.

Water and Spirit

What we carry as an ongoing recognisable condition of our salvation in Jesus is not our water baptism (as good and important this is as a public statement of faith and of coming into fellowship with the people of God), BUT the ongoing recognisable condition we take with us is a baptism in the Holy Spirit.

+ Acts 8:4-19

Baptism with water and baptism in the Spirit. Each came with some tangible evidence. Just like you know that when you get immersed in water baptism, you get wet (a recognisable condition), there is some evidence of being baptised in the Spirit - "When Simon saw that the Spirit was given" (v18), means that there was something happening to them that was visible.

+ Acts 10:44-48 – Gentiles come to faith in Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit

+ Acts 11:15-17 – There is a similar outpouring and evidence of baptism of the Holy Spirit as at Pentecost

A Greek Salad Recipe

The Greek poet and physician, Nicander of Colophon – describes the making of pickles using the biblical language which we understand the term baptism.

Bapto – to dip into hot water, or to blanch

Baptidzo – immersed in a vinegar solution

Both Greek verbs involved immersing vegetables in liquid solutions. In the case of the pickle, the dipping in water was temporary, while immersing it in the vinegar solution was complete and produced a permanent change.

God wants you to be pickled in the Holy Spirit to the point where the Holy Spirit gets in so deep it causes a transformation that can't be reversed and with it comes a recognisable condition.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

- + He leads us to conviction of sin and the need for a Saviour in Jesus
- + It is the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that brings us into new birth, that brings forth the new creation
- + He comforts, guides and leads believers into truth
- + He dynamically empowers believers with gifts, miracles and evangelism along with fruit and growth

Gordon Fee on the topic says, it just does not seem to ever be the biblical norm that the *"Christian life should consist of conversion without empowering, baptism without obedience, and grace without love"*. (Gospel and Spirit – Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics)

There is an empowering dimension of life in the Spirit that is the normal Christian life – and from every skerrick of evidence in the Bible comes with a recognisable condition.

Why is this so important? Because the power of the church to move and operate in the advancement of God's Kingdom must be by the power of heaven, in the spiritual realm and that requires the baptism of the Holy Spirit and a constant infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Be Filled

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, a church that has already received the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7), exhorts them to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

Paul is urging them to continually live in/by the Spirit. Don't just receive the baptism, be filled to overflowing – get pickled!

All truly Christian behaviour is the result of being Spirit people. The being filled (continuously), is Paul's point – he's not so much saying be "drunk on the Spirit" as he is saying – the work of the Spirit in every area of your life should be as obvious as the effects of too much wine someone has drunk. You're infused with His presence, and it affects all aspects of your life:

- + Mind and thoughts
- + Actions and commitments
- + Love and deeds
- + Gifts and manifestations

Discussion Questions

1. Read through some of the passages listed in the outline from the book of Acts. What strikes you as the same or different to your conversion experience?
2. Share the testimony of what it was like to be baptised in water. What has been the lasting significance of this for you?
3. What do you understand the term 'baptised in the Holy Spirit' to mean? Does any of this come with apprehension or fear?
4. In John 15:5, Jesus says we can do nothing without Him. Do you think He could be alluding to a life infused (abiding) in relationship with the power of the Holy Spirit? How different then does that look from a life not infused with Holy Spirit?
5. Where would you like to see a more powerful expression of the Holy Spirit at work through you? Describe what that might look like.
6. Pray for one another. Start with that simple and ancient prayer – "Come Holy Spirit" and ask for the baptism of His Spirit and a fresh infilling to live a victorious Christian life.