

# BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

I have been corresponding for some months now with a gentleman who believes that the *one baptism* of Eph. 4:5 is baptism in the Holy Spirit. This assertion comes from one far from being a complete novice in the scriptures but from a very God-fearing gentleman with a life-time of bible-study behind him and an otherwise extensive knowledge of the contents of the bible. Since entering this correspondence I have discovered that this belief, that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the only baptism authorised by God today, is a belief very widely held amongst many denominational bodies. With a view to assisting some of our younger readers to a better understanding of the matter I offer the following brief remarks on the subject.

The first consideration which springs to mind is to discover the identity of the various baptisms of New Testament times and to ascertain which, if any or all, are valid today. There would appear to have been five baptisms which receive mention in the New Testament and which figured in the early days on New Testament history. Firstly we might note the baptism of suffering (Matt. 20:22); the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11); baptism of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11) baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11) and the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in water for the remission of sins (Matt. 28:19). Although followers of Christ are called upon to suffer when necessary I think most bible students would agree that the baptism of suffering was unique to our Lord and not something vied for today. It had particular reference to Jesus and to a lesser extent to the apostles. I will maintain that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit had also a limited application to a certain few in New Testament times and is not therefore something to be expected or sought after today. Similarly the baptism of John the Baptist was something to temporary duration in New Testament times and men ought not to seek the baptism of John today — in this connection it seems strange that men can understand why they should not pursue John's baptism today but cannot understand why they should not expect the baptism of the Holy Spirit today. Most strange. Why is it that men can read their New Testaments and understand the temporary nature of John the Baptist's baptism; that it fulfilled its short-term purpose and is no longer with us, but can not understand that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit had a similar short-term purpose and is similarly not with us now. The apostle Paul was aware of all of those five baptisms and yet he declared (many years after all five of those baptisms had received due notice in

these early days of Christianity) in Eph. 4:4,5; "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." According to the apostle, at that time at which he wrote, inspired as he was by the Holy Spirit, there was only ONE baptism. Of the five baptisms already mentioned which one was it? My correspondent maintains that it is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Is he correct or very seriously mistaken. The context of these words of Paul's is governed by the previous verse (Eph. 4:3) which is an exhortation to the Christians at Ephesus to endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." In what way were these Ephesians responsible for the unity of the Spirit? It devolved upon them to *Uphold the institution* by which this unity had been secured. The circumcised and the uncircumcised had been made one body, they had received the one Spirit in gifts and sealing, they had received the one hope of glory through Christ the one Lord, they had embraced the one faith by the apostles, and the one immersion into Christ, and one Father by their birth from above, and this unity was to be kept unbroken. Judaising teachers were even then busy laying another foundation, even the rites of Moses, and the Ephesians are urged to beware and accept no other foundation or ground of unity than that laid by the apostles of Jesus. It would be most inconsistent with Paul's argument here if there could be anything divisive about baptism, or that he should talk of One baptism while meaning four or five baptisms. In Paul's mind there was as much right for two Lords as two baptisms; for two bodies as two baptisms; for two faiths as two baptisms. If my correspondent is correct in his belief that the one baptism is Holy Spirit baptism it follows, therefore, that from the moment that Eph. 4:5 was penned baptism in water for the remission of sins became invalid. Did the baptism commanded by Jesus become invalid when Eph. 4:5 was penned? Did Jesus ever give any hint that his baptism was to be of a temporary nature and that it would expire in terms of Eph. 4:5. Surely not — rather the reverse. Jesus indicates the PERMANENCY of the baptism in water for the remission of sins in His parting instructions to his apostles (Matt. 28:19-20). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." Clearly these instructions to the apostles have a continuity about them and Jesus expected his disciples in every age, each generation in turn, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, baptising them into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, even to the end of the world. *This* is the baptism to which the apostle Paul referred as the ONE baptism in Eph. 4:5. It was to be, like the gospel, age lasting. There seems to be nothing temporary about that. Subsequent events tell us that the apostles were not disobedient to Christ's instructions but began, at Pentecost. (Acts 2) to implement them and we read of the apostle Peter preaching the gospel and on being asked what sinners must do, instructing that they should repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. That day 3,000 gladly received his words and were baptised in water for the abrogation of their sins. Paul knew that Christ's baptism in water had supplanted the baptism of John the Baptist for when he came across some disciples in Ephesus who knew only John's baptism he explained to them the difference between the two baptisms and had them baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 19: 1-5). Similarly the apostle Peter knew that even baptism in the Holy Spirit did not supplant the baptism of Jesus in water, for remission of sins, for when he was confronted with the fact that Cornelius and his friends had been baptised in the Holy Spirit he nevertheless, COMMANDED that they be baptised in water in the name of the Lord. (Acts 10-47, 48).

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit was a 'one-off' event in the early formation of the church and it was a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. Similarly the crucifixion was a 'one-off' event which was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. The miracles, wonders and signs come into this same category. One might as well expect disciples to go around raising the dead today as to expect the baptism in the Holy Spirit. There are only two recorded instances of baptism in the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. One, in Acts 2, involved the Jews (in the form of the apostles) and one involved the Gentiles (in the form of Cornelius and his household) in Acts 10. Unique phenomena attended both baptisms, in the form of a *sound* as of a rushing mighty wind (filling an entire building) and cloven tongues like fire sitting upon each participant. Each participant could immediately thereafter speak in known languages which he had never learned (Acts 2:8). I wonder if those special phenomena attend any of the alleged baptisms in the Holy Spirit today? I offer to travel any distance to see and hear them. The apostle Peter, in response to the incredulity of those who witnessed this baptism explained that this was the FULFILMENT of the prophecy of Joel's that in the last days God would pour out His spirit upon all flesh. The entire prophecy was fulfilled before that 'great and notable day of the Lord' which in this context was the overthrow of the Jews as the nation of God (Acts 2:16-21). Baptism in the Holy Spirit seems to have been confined to the two instances recorded and *all* the early disciples were certainly not recipients of it. Why men should expect to be recipients of it today is beyond me. We are however, commanded to be baptised in water for the remission of sins — Oh that men are as punctilious about seeing that this was done. Baptism in the Holy Spirit was not a command but a gift (Acts 11:17) and a promise. Even the apostles had to 'tarry' until Jesus deemed the time fit to bestow it upon them. If Jesus sees fit to bestow it upon us today we shall know it and so will everyone else — for we shall be able to speak in languages we have never learned. If Jesus *does not* bestow the gift then we shall know that He has not bestowed it for we *shall not* be able to speak in languages we have never learned. It would seem therefore that the onus of proof lies with those who claim to have been baptised in the Holy Spirit to demonstrate the fact by speaking in languages they have not learned. Mind you speaking in languages we have never learned would have little relevance today but was a most important capability for the apostles to receive. God's full revelation. the bible. is available today in virtually every language.

In summing up then, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit was a promise and not a gift, not a command: was received, not obeyed: Christ was the administrator, not man: it was poured out from heaven, not performed on earth by man: it was promised as a miraculous power, not commanded as an ordinance. It was a miracle, was always attended by miracles, and always conferred miraculous powers. It was not a memorial, a type, a symbol, a likeness, a form, an object lesson, setting forth any fact or truth. It was perhaps one of the most extraordinary and miraculous events in the gospel dispensation; did not and could not become a permanent element in the church. There is now only one baptism in the church, and it is the 'one baptism' taught in Eph. 4:5. It is commanded by Jesus and men are taught to administer it to others. Men are to obey it. It is in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and it is in water. It is a monument of Christ's burial and resurrection, a monument of the great facts of the gospel, a likeness, a form, an object-lesson setting forth Christ's burial and resurrection, also the sinner's burial to his past sinful life, and his resurrection to a new life in Christ. It is for the remission of sins and is a permanent gate into the church and kingdom of God.

Editor.