

WATER BAPTISM

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(A Figure of the True)

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The text

This edition is based on the texts of Mr North's books which first appeared on the website of Lanark Christian Fellowship many years ago.

We have exercised as much care as possible in the conversion into this format, but if you are aware of any errors, could you please let us know.

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Water Baptism

One of the most rewarding of all pursuits to the student of scripture is to trace the way in which the commands and ordinances of the Lord were applied and outworked in the lives and ministries of those to whom they were given. By doing this, it is possible, with a measure of certainty, to arrive at some fairly accurate conclusions about them, and to assess how they were received and understood by those to whom they were given in trust.

Any who undertake to do this may rest assured in heart that the men to whom the Lord committed His orders sought only to obey and practise without deviation what they were told from the Lord. Having this assurance, it may be expected that the result of any such investigation will furnish the

student with all the factual data upon which correct judgements may be formed. This assurance is ascertained to us by the fact that the Lord Jesus was as much concerned as the apostles that what He commanded them at first should be interpreted, applied and communicated aright, so that in process of time it may be understood correctly by us. The more so since He knew that what was ordained would remain and what was commanded would be written down to become the handbook of the Church, affecting its growth and development throughout the entire age.

This kind of painstaking care shown by the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost and the early Church guarantees that any investigation of scripture such as we now undertake, may be conducted with safety in absolute assurance that all knowledge thereby gained has been

preserved unto us by the Lord Himself. He who originally gave the truth now guards it, and the men who received it directly from Him faithfully transmitted it, first to their own generation by word and practice, and then to us by pen, that we might proceed with certainty upon just such an investigation as we now undertake.

I- THE FORERUNNER- THE PREPARATION

The Herald of the Christ

The importance of baptism could not be more strongly emphasised to us than by the discovery we make upon opening the pages of the four Gospels. Before we have read very far into each of them, we are introduced by all four to the person of John the Baptist, who, they say, was sent from God to Israel as the official herald and forerunner of Jesus Christ. In the course of his ministry John authoritatively announced the imminent coming of Christ, who, he said, was above him, and was to be preferred before him.

Having stated this, he officially presented the Lord Jesus to Israel, saying clearly that this was the main reason for his baptism,

and making plain that all other things accomplished by it only had any value as they were related to this. John was a Spirit-filled man, a great saint, a burning and a shining light and a mighty preacher. He came to Israel in the spirit and power of Elijah to fulfil scripture with a ministry of conversion to the Christ whom they did not know.

Baptism an Innovation

John's call to repentance and baptism in water unto the remission of sins was an innovation indeed to them, for they were a people who had been reared in the Mosaic tradition of bloodshed and sacrifice for the remission of sins. In the synagogues they left behind them, the book of the law was still being read, prayers spoken and psalms sung with time-honoured regularity of religious obedience, but all to no avail apparently, for the people were flocking in multitudes to

hear and obey the new messenger with the new message. Although they did not know it they were witnessing the death of an era; God was ushering in a new age wherein the old order should pass away for ever. He it was who sent John into the borders of the desert to commence the operation by crying out in the wilderness that all men should come to his baptism of repentance and be ready to meet their God.

Baptism Extra-legal

Perhaps it was not strange to them that they needed to repent, but it was certainly new that they needed to be baptised, for the law said nothing about it. Nowhere was it recorded that God had spoken by any former prophet, saying that men should be baptised for the remission of sins. At the very beginning of their national history, when Moses had meticulously recorded

what he had received from God concerning atonement and forgiveness of sins, he had said nothing about a baptism such as this that John was talking about. It was definitely extra-legal.

This man's ministry and method were unmentioned, unprecedented and unpredicted in the whole of scripture. Even in the prophetic passage which John quoted as his authority for this ministry there is neither direct reference nor indirect hint of this new method, nor anything that could be quoted to his inquisitors as justification for it. Why then this baptism which he so confidently ministered?

Baptism God's New Method

Baptism? Whence came it? Is it of heaven or of men? Well might Jesus later pose the question and challenge the Pharisees, for

baptism is absolutely vital — there is no mistaking the implication of it. It is either right or wrong. The Lord Jesus knew, as only He could, that John was right. Baptism is of heaven, and although it was an entirely new departure, it was not entirely un-foreshadowed. John was sent from God to innovate among men on earth a method which has never since been erased from the practice of Christian religion. By his watery baptism, John was introducing into the world and typifying unto men the method, though not the means, by which God intended later to bring many Sons unto His heavenly kingdom and glory.

God begins to Reveal His Eternal Plan

By the Mosaic propitiatory system the Lord Jesus was chiefly set forth as both sacrifice and priest; but differing from His illustrious predecessor Moses, John's ministry

unmistakably revealed Jesus to be both Sacrifice and Baptizer. John never led anyone to an altar; he called them to a river, where later He who was the Lamb of God and the Baptizer in the Spirit was to be presented. Whether or not John knew what his actions and preaching would effect among men we do not know, but by his light we see that baptism has now replaced the practice of that former sacrificial system.

History reveals that by John's day the Mosaic system had already ceased to be anything more than mere ritualism. Behind the Temple veil in Jerusalem there was no Ark of the Covenant, no tables of stone, no Mercy Seat, no blood, no glory, no Holy of Holies, no God. But this was not the only reason why God was making moves to replace that old system. He was revealing the greater and more wondrous fact that the onus which

had lain upon people under Moses' law to provide themselves with their own sacrifices for sin was not God's original and eternal purpose for man.

For those who had eyes to see it, He had revealed to Abraham long before Moses' day that He Himself would provide the Lamb.

Through John He was giving men a glimpse of the fact that His method for mankind is gracious engulfment in love, which is by floods of Holy Spirit in which to baptise dead men into life, regenerating their spirits and saving their souls, Of necessity God had imposed upon His people the historic sacrificial system, but He did so reluctantly and then only until the time when according to His original purpose, the symbols should be swept away in the reformation brought in by His Son.

Behold the Lamb of God

By introducing John's baptism, God was announcing to that generation the imminent dissolution of the Mosaic doctrine of man's personal sacrifice for personal sin. He was saying that He was going to do it all Himself, indeed had already accepted the responsibility for it — 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'. By analysis John is found to be saying, 'all that you need to produce is fruit meet for repentance. Don't bring anything else; let me do the rest, come and let me baptise you'. He is also found saying of Jesus, 'He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and fire; let Him do that'.

By God's ordination and commandment through John, baptism as a method as well as a practice had been introduced to men. Having been divinely instituted, water baptism has come to stay as the official

picture of what takes place in the real baptism it represents. It is a visual aid to the understanding of the Baptism in the Spirit, which is the Lord's method of giving eternal life to men and women throughout this era. Established first as a type under John by water during the last days of the passing Covenant, baptism was finally established in reality under Jesus by the Spirit on the first day of the New Covenant, namely the day of Pentecost. The new superseded the old.

That taketh away the Sin of the World

Examining the opening chapters of the Gospels more closely, we discover the amazing fact that John Baptist only once mentioned the Lord Jesus in connection with sin — ' Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'. It is nothing less than astonishing and completely beyond expectation to the

devout mind that such an immeasurably important event as Calvary should be referred to by God's official messenger but once. To people reared in fundamental evangelical traditions it is hardly acceptable that this outstanding herald from God should come with an authentic message and only once speak of the focal point of redemption, and in such an oblique manner too! However it is true, and the significance of this fact is quite unmistakable to those who have a heart to recognise all that is implied thereby.

Later the apostolic authors were to write comparatively voluminously about this, but John Baptist hardly mentions it. With the simplicity of inspired brevity he includes in one masterly sentence the enormity of the vast sacrificial work to which his Lord was committed. This was not due to any slip on

John's part, nor because he thought it was unimportant; the omission was quite deliberate; it was all part of the revelation of God's great plan to shift the responsibility of sin-offering and sacrifice from man to Himself.

In Jesus Christ, by one deliberate act, God fully comprehended and finished all His past demands upon men. He wound up and abolished for ever the partial system He had formerly instituted, because it involved unending offerings, each incomplete and of itself quite unable to take away sin. At the same time, however, men had to be acquainted with all the facts concerning the new response which was expected of them in view of God's grace in absolving them from their former responsibility.

So it is that following Calvary the complete and repetitive insistence of the majority of

the New Testament writers is about baptism and life in the Spirit to be accomplished in men by God upon their repentance and faith. (As an illustration and example of this, note Peter's response to his enquirers' question on the day of Pentecost.)

He shall Baptise You with the Holy Ghost

Three other facts ought to be noted here also: (1) three of the four Gospel writers, when speaking of John Baptist, made no reference to the statement by him

[mentioned on the previous page]; (2) they did not in any other way, at that time, refer to the Lord's death on the cross; (3) all four of them published the fact that the Baptist proclaimed Jesus Christ as the Baptizer in the Spirit. There must be some special reason for this; seeing that the Holy Ghost is the inspirer of these great truths of

scripture, this ratio of three to one points a lesson that we do ill to neglect.

Pursuing our examination further, it emerges that although John commanded his hearers to come to himself and his baptism for forgiveness, he never once gave anyone directions to go to Christ for it. It seemed natural common sense to him that Jesus was going to do a far vaster thing than forgive people. He had come to take away the sin of the world; to remove it utterly. Jesus, John said, was going to thoroughly purge His floor and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. That is a most challenging and important fact which should be of great significance to us all. Coupled with that, he never once spoke directly of the cross, or mentioned the blood, or salvation or justification, or the many other similar connected doctrines, but referred almost

exclusively to the baptism that Jesus Would administer to men.

A Burning and a Shining Light

In order to properly understand all this, we must grasp the fact that John was the last of a great line of Old Testament prophets who saw and spoke only in terms of the Kingdom of Heaven — the reign of God on earth — which he said was at hand. Although he prophesied of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God, and foreshadowed the introduction of the great age of grace, he never saw or understood the cross; he was the herald of the King, His forerunner and friend.

Being filled with the Spirit, John burned and shone in the cold dark to warm men and light them into the highway he was commissioned to prepare for the coming of the Son of God. It was a task of great

magnitude, but he faithfully accomplished it. Immersing his converts in the tangible element of water, John symbolised to them what the King should later do to their spirits in the eternal Spirit of God.

The Ultimate Baptism

Although, like those of old, men may not recognise this, it is absolutely necessary that Jesus should baptise everyone in the Holy Ghost. Holy Spirit is that basic intangible elemental Spirit in which the eternal life of Jesus Christ still subsists. John's baptism came to pass; Jesus' baptism has come to stay throughout this entire age as being from heaven and not of man. It is the real baptism, being in Spirit and not water. It is eternal, being of spirits and not of bodies. It is actual and not symbolic, because it is administered by Christ and not by man. Such

powerful insistence as this must surely be regarded among us as of major importance.

He must Increase

John was sent deliberately by God as no-one else before him. In many respects none of those who were regarded as the great men of the Patriarchal or Israelitish eras was as great as he. On the human side he was cousin to the Lord Jesus and was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. Though he represented the law and the prophets, in his ministry he superseded both it and them — and their combined messages.

John was the first man sent to preach the Kingdom of Heaven and officially inaugurate baptism among men. He embodied the spirit and power of Elijah and was the forerunner of the Christ, in which capacity he came with

a ministry of Annunciation, Preparation and Restoration. These three emphases run concurrently throughout his entire ministry, which was heraldic in nature and symbolic in demonstration. Baptism was the focal point, the all-important feature; everything led up to, centred around and depended upon BAPTISM. By baptism:

- (1) the annunciation was made: 'This is my beloved Son', 'This is the Son of God';
- (2) the preparation was effected: 'I baptise you', 'He shall baptise you';
- (3) Restoration was demonstrated: 'I with water', 'He with the Holy Ghost and fire'.

As it was in the Beginning

All is to be as it was in the beginning. The original intentions of God have never been relinquished by Him, and through this man in his day the Lord sought to prepare

mankind for the One who would restore all to His eternal purposes and first ways. In accordance with this, when giving their records of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, three of the Gospel writers go right back in time, authenticating their writings by rooting their accounts in history. Mark goes back as far as the Prophets; Matthew goes further back to the Patriarchs; Luke goes still further back to Adam, the first man; but in writing his account of the Son of God, John goes back furthest of the four — to God, the very beginning of all.

It is not surprising then that in this last Gospel, John furnishes us with the one statement from John Baptist which in any way connects Jesus Christ with sacrifice, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'. In doing this he takes us right back beyond earth time to that

which was in the beginning with God. The phrase 'in the beginning' brings us into mystery. In it the eternity of unmeasured and immeasurable events meets the measured and measurable succession of time. We do not know when, neither can we know how nor where, we only know that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. It is as though on one hand time had not been, for here on the threshold of history we are introduced to God and the Lamb. Yet, as though all history was concluded, anticipating all time, the Lamb was slain.

Then again, reading Genesis, we see that right there in the beginning when He was proceeding to bring forth creation God started with water. Everything that God made on this planet would have had no being except He had first brought forth the

earth out of the waters. The deep waters, it seems, were original and fundamental to all. The earth was brought forth, came into light and became recognisably known only as emerging from a mighty baptism — it certainly did not break off the sun.

Pondering this, we should have no difficulty in seeing and accepting the fact that John Baptist was sent of God to bring to our notice and acceptance the twin eternal principles upon which God founded both the material earth and the spiritual Kingdom of Heaven, namely the Lamb and the Baptism. Everything of spiritual import and meaning, whether it be of sin and sacrifice or animal blood and altar or temple and service, all that has of necessity intervened at God's direct command or consent from the beginning of the world was bridged by John in his day. By launching his ministry out in

the formless void of the wilderness, John brought everything back to 'as it was in the beginning' ; his was a ministry of Restoration; not now lambs, blood, sacrifices, atonements, Tabernacle, Temple, Law — but Baptism.

Out of the Water and in the Water

Peter, speaking in his second epistle of the original creation, says, 'the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water'. That is how it was in the beginning and that is just where God began again. John Baptist presents Jesus to us, standing out of the water and in the water under the open heavens on the edge of the wilderness, with God's voice ringing out, 'this is my beloved Son'. And crowning all, he tells us that he also beheld the Spirit of God descending in bodily shape like a dove, not now as in the beginning to move upon the

face of the water, but specifically to rest upon Him. In Genesis the earth is seen to be God's new creation; now it is Jesus who is revealed from heaven as the true new creation. Here then is the great new demonstration of God's determination to make all men return to and begin at the beginning; baptism, not sacrifice, is the way for men now.

All was but preparation however, for John could not move in true spiritual elements; he only ministered in the figures of the true. One of the reasons for the descent of the dove after the baptism was to show that John could not baptise in the Spirit. He could only use water; the Spirit was not at his disposal, so He came down afterwards; it was very distinctly noticeable. John was but a man, so he could only symbolise; he was not God who moves in realities.

By Water and the Spirit

Let us take note that in the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth there was no such thing as 'baptism' in water first, to be followed later by a second experience of Baptism in Spirit — the whole happened synchronously. One word was spoken, one will expressed, one power was demonstrated with one result; water and Spirit were combined in one act of baptism.

Moses tells us that when God spoke His creative word, the Spirit of God was already moving (fluttering, brooding) upon the face of the water. It was utterly impossible for the earth to appear from out of the water without it also at that exact moment being in the Spirit. We see then that Creation was by water and Spirit. So also, Jesus says, is New Birth. It is plain to behold that as in the beginning that 'new creation' was brought

into being by a kind of baptismal generation, so is it also now. In the present, eternal New Creation, all is and can only be by the true baptismal regeneration. Whether it be Birth or New Birth, Creation or New Creation, all is by Baptismal Generation. The outward, material and physical is but the visible demonstration, parable, or picture of the inward, spiritual and real; God Himself has not changed, nor has He changed His method. However, because by the Gospel we are brought out of the old into the New, we speak of God's present work as Baptismal Regeneration. The prefix 're' distinguishes the eternal condition from the temporal, the new birth from the first birth, spiritual life from natural life and the holy from the sinful which all men by first birth inherit.

By Power from on High

Having seen that the original creation came up from the deeps beneath the surface of the water, let us also notice just as clearly that it only emerged by reason of the spoken word and by power being present by reason of the Person of the Spirit hovering over the waters. Like the dawning of original light, the realisation comes to us that the birth/creation/ generation of the earth was from above; it was as surely by power from on high as was the conception of Jesus by Mary and the birth of the Church at Pentecost. Just as truly as Jesus' earthly generation was by power from on high, so also the new birth for men is from above by the Baptism in the Spirit which endues with power from on high. All is accomplished by the Baptism.

Baptism — Totality

We are given to understand that the word 'baptism' means to dip or to immerse. This

being so, it is at once seen that strictly speaking the original creation did not come into being by an act of baptism as we now know it, for it was not dipped or immersed in water as though from above, as being first without and/or above it. Instead God reveals that He brought forth dry land from the waters. He chose to do it this way. The generation of the world was from and through water, and it was accomplished by the Spirit responding to the Word, corresponding and conforming all to it. That was how God did it in material, natural generation. In the same way also regeneration is associated with baptism, which exercise, though it carries the thought of dipping, is only accomplished by immersion into, with a view to remaining and establishing in.

Thus the combination of all the ideas relevant to the whole truth is seen to be very felicitous and most instructive. In the act of baptism the Lord is enforcing His original design; man must go back again to eternal realities and unchanging principles. He must go down in, be dipped into, totally immersed (who would begrudge totality at this point?), he must remain and be in the Spirit, thereby becoming wholly new. Thus the prefix 're' is grammatically, logically, scientifically, ethically and spiritually right, for by its use generation becomes regeneration, whereby man is powerfully realigned with God's eternal principles and powers.

An Altogether New Creation

Man, the end-product of God's original creation and His crowning glory fell from the condition in which God created him and

thereby forfeited the position he held. Almost immediately from the beginning he broke with the God-given means and principles of life, Being now fallen and quite ignorant of what he is doing, he readily improvises means of his own creating, or else accepts substitutes for reality which are totally inadequate for his needs. But God in His eternal love has given us grace to return to the original truth. By the operation of those same unchanging and eternal powers, man is brought back into line with God and His principles of working in the original generation/creation.

As we know, when being baptised by man a person is baptised into the water as from without and/or above the water and rises from it again. By the whole symbolism it is as though he comes up then a new creation. This is because by Christ's baptism, of which

water baptism is a picture, he has been brought up into the Spirit a new-born spirit, and this being so, everything is as it was in the beginning. For this is how it was also with Adam — he was both created and born. His body was formed and shaped from dust, but he himself was created a living soul as (a) spirit was engendered within that earth by the direct inspiration of spirit into dust by God; the man Adam was begotten.

Baptism the Method of the Kingdom

John had to say, 'I baptise with water; He shall baptise with the Holy Ghost'. Saying so, he pronounced the reason for his departure; he had to go in order to give place to his better. 'I, (who stand for water baptism) must decrease; He (who stands for Spirit Baptism) must increase, said John. 'What do you John?' 'I baptise with water and depart'. 'What do You Jesus?' 'I abide and baptise

with the Spirit'. That is the method of the man with the message of the Kingdom — BAPTISM.

Note:

By this appraisal of biblical truth we discover many things, one of which is that the whole idea of sprinkling for baptism is wrong, for it has no philosophical foundation in the scriptural revelation of the creative methods of God. This being so, the practice of sprinkling, whether it be applied to infant or adult, must also surely be wrong.

2- THIS IS MY BELOVED SON — THE PRESENTATION

The ANOINTING

The Baptist's mission to Israel was twofold: (1) to prepare the way of the Lord, (2) to present the Lord. It was primarily for the fulfilment of the second part of His forerunner's ministry that Jesus came to Jordan. So there in the river Jesus was presented to Israel and it is recorded that standing in the watery element as being true substance within it, He was seen by John to receive the Holy Ghost under the Father's approving eye.

It is perfectly reasonable to assume that in keeping with all modern practice of water baptism the persons John baptised went into and out of the river, having been

immersed by him in one swift operation. But when Jesus was baptised He went into the water for immersion, and rising stood there praying, waiting for His anointing and identification. One of the reasons for this was that the abiding substance of baptism might be revealed.

Fulfilling all Righteousness

When the Lord Jesus went down into Jordan and came out again, He did so with the full intention of setting forth entirely new and much fuller truth than that which had hitherto been known. In doing so He utterly fulfilled all righteousness and became the perfect example for us. This accomplished, He came up out of the waters as though He was the one for whom all righteousness had been fulfilled. In His own marvellous way He combined two opposites, for rising from Jordan He stood up as it were from death as

though He was a Spirit-baptized regenerate. In doing so He symbolically vested both the act and the waters of baptism with age-abiding newness of meaning; He added to its symbolism the as yet unrevealed fact of Calvary.

The waters were granted the sacred privilege of representing the Holy Spirit, in whom the fact and power of redemption is now permanently held for us. He came forth from baptism as though He were a crucified, risen man, (having been slain, dead, buried and raised again) born again of the Spirit of God and anointed for service. Baptism symbolised both the tomb of Christ and the womb of God and the issues from them both, none of which can be by water or blood, but only by Spirit Baptism.

Jesus Christ was not actually baptised in the Spirit at Jordan; figuratively as the

representative man, He fulfilled all righteousness in a way far beyond the comprehension of even a John Baptist. Figuratively baptised, actually anointed, the Lord sets forth for all men for all time and in all perfection the difference between these, as well as the necessity for both. That which was so delightfully pictured by the Lord at Jordan had to await the coming of the Spirit ere it could be finally adapted to the needs of all men and put to its fullest use in the Kingdom of God.

What Jesus did then was anticipatory, the events He had symbolised had to be enacted in reality; it was all a foreshadowing of what yet had to be established and become the real substance of the type. The Lord had to die and be buried and rise again, and return to heaven. Promises had to be kept, and the Holy Ghost must be shed forth — that could

not be until the historic Calvary should be permanently established in the spiritual world as age-abiding reality.

Into His Name

So far as was possible at that time, John had succeeded in presenting Jesus, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in baptism; more than he knew, he had presented the triune God and His method; the reality of his mission had in measure been achieved. John Baptist had used water only for the fulfilment of his baptism, and when he had baptised people his basic ministry was completed by that act. He baptised in Jordan only; he just baptised unto remission of sins, that is all. He did not baptise in his own name; he did not baptise in any name, he certainly did not baptise in Jesus' name, for confessedly he did not know Him. But Christian baptism is ministered in Jesus'

name, which is to say that, whereas John baptised into water, the apostles baptised into Jesus' name.

To understand this let us in thought substitute the Holy Ghost for Jordan and Jesus standing in the Spirit as He did in Jordan and the picture becomes clear. This all means that people are really to be baptised into a bodily person, for that is the sole common-sense and comprehensive reason for baptising them in and into the name of that person. Had we eyes to see it, nothing could have been more clearly shown us by God than what took place at Jordan under John.

The Transition

At this point we can scarcely do better than seek to arrive at a correct understanding of the emphatic words spoken so clearly by the

Lord Jesus and recorded in Matthew 28:19,20. Until that moment the apostles had only baptised people in the name of the Lord Jesus because that is all they had been able to do. That is to say, when the apostles had gone out preaching and had converted men and women to discipleship of Jesus, they had naturally enough baptised them in Jesus' name. We are told in John 4: 1,2 that although Jesus made and baptised more disciples than John, 'Jesus Himself baptised not, but His disciples'.

No reasonable conclusion may be drawn from these words other than that the disciples baptised in Jesus' name, that is in His presence, and in His stead with His approval, and undoubtedly at His command. When later those same men were sent out to preach, they did so in a heraldic capacity in much the same manner as John before

them had done. At that time they, as he, had only limited knowledge, for they did not know the full gospel, and could therefore only preach a limited evangel according to their limited revelation. They were the chosen apostles of the Lord, but at that time Jesus Himself was 'straitened', so He said; consequently neither He nor they could preach the gospel as it is now preached.

As far as baptism is concerned, the Lord stepped in and took over from John Baptist, deliberately continuing the ministry which the prophet received from heaven. Starting where John left off, the Lord took up and enlarged upon his message, administering water baptism for the remission of sins, but remaining significantly quiet about Baptism in the Spirit.

He of Whom John Spake

From that time onward, John's baptising ministry was gradually phased out until it ceased altogether, while Jesus, having retained and incorporated it into His ministry, went on to fulfil it. Later He changed and enlarged it in many ways too numerous to mention now. But this He could not fully do until He underwent His own personal baptism into death, for although this was not in the least understood by those who were partakers of John's baptism, it is most certainly implied by it, being as it were just below the surface of the water. It is therefore plainly to be seen that the vast and most important part of Jesus' ministry was not revealed while He was as yet standing on the earth, but awaited His own personally administered baptism into death and consequent resurrection.

During Jesus' earthly life, water baptism was the only one known and practised because the real baptism was not then known, nor could be. It is for this reason He handed over water baptism to His disciples. It was not only policy that He did so, it was necessary also if He did not wish to confuse people. John had said of Jesus, 'He who cometh after me is the Christ, the Son of God, He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and fire'. Jesus therefore did not allow people any ground to imagine that water baptism, whether practised at that time by Himself or administered by His disciples in His name, was in some mysterious way to be construed or mystically substituted for the greater, real Baptism. Water baptism as such is not Jesus' baptism; (His Baptism cannot be administered by man, nor in that element,

but by Himself alone) being administered by water, it can safely be left to men.

Into the Name — I AM

Returning to Jesus' last command to His disciples in Matthew 28, it ought to be noted that He neither told them then, nor has told anyone since to say anything during the course of baptism. He did not supply us with a baptismal formula, as though He was teaching the science of baptism; He told us to do it, that is all, and in doing so, to administer it with the purpose of baptising people 'into the name of' the triune God, It is therefore quite in order for someone who is totally dumb to baptise someone who is stone deaf into that name. The repetition of words is not the important point of the matter; providing Jesus is there, such a baptism would be quite as valid as any other.

What the Lord actually said in Matthew 28 was 'Go ye therefore and make disciples of every nation, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost'. It is important to note that He did not say 'into the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost', as though to imply that the three should be grouped together in one personal name, for that is not the same thing. To mistakenly think that both forms of expression mean the same thing is to lay the foundation of the subtle error which has now become so prevalent among men. According to all known rules of grammar, the words the Lord spoke were really a shortened form of 'baptising them into the name of the Father and into the name of the Son and into the name of the Holy Ghost', which is a very different and perfectly consistent thing. Further, He did not say

'baptising them into the names of etc.', as though He commanded that all of the many names which each person of the Trinity bears must be stated. That would be altogether too great a task.

There is a name which each person of the blessed Trinity bears in His own right, whether He be the Father or the Son or the Holy Ghost; each one jointly shares this name with the others. Seeing this is so, without doubt it is into this name that all must be baptised. This simple yet profound name is stated quite clearly in verse 20, 'I AM with you always, even unto the consummation of the age'. The name and person into which all must be baptised is 'I AM'; it is the one name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Milleniums before Matthew wrote his Gospel, God had said that He would be known by this name

to every generation. It is therefore exactly right to baptise into that name and not into the name of any one person. I AM is the first expression of self-recognition, the eternal consciousness of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This age is the age of generation into I AM by I AM for I AM in I AM, that is God.

In Lieu of Jesus

In the closing days of the age preceding this present one, that is following John's baptism, people were baptised in the name of Jesus only, because then the disciples did not know the Father and the Holy Ghost. But during this age of greater revelation, people must be baptised into the name of the triune God; Jesus is but one person of the triune Being of God. Therefore to baptise people in the name of Jesus only, with or without the deliberate intention of excluding

the Father and the Holy Ghost, is reprehensible to say the least. If the omission is deliberate it is sin. If it is unintentional or has been practised without full knowledge, it is a mistake which should be rectified. If on the other hand it has been done with full intention to include the Father and the Holy Ghost, then the whole practice is meaningless, for why exclude all reference to them if they are meant to be included? And if it all means the same, why are the Father and the Holy Ghost so dishonoured? The whole thing has become farcical if not done with sincere intention. What it could be made to mean at the most is unthinkable. 'In the name of Jesus' only is pre-Calvary and pre-Pentecost; it was the way people were baptised during the period between the decline of John's baptism and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; an interim

period only; it was right then, it is wrong now. Since Pentecost, the administrant, when baptising, is to be understood as doing the work in lieu of the Lord, that is, as though it were the Lord Himself doing it. That is the true purpose of and reason for doing it in Jesus' name.

In Christ's Stead

For a proper grasp of the true import and great responsibility of using the phrase 'in Jesus' name', we must deeply understand and enter into the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5.20 — 'we ... in Christ's stead'. When a man says, 'in Jesus' name', he must mean that he is himself there 'in Jesus' stead'. This is the only thing that makes sense of 'in Jesus' name'. If it be insisted, as it may be upon certain grounds, that it should be 'into Jesus' name', the above is still true; for only Jesus Himself can baptise into Himself. Only if he is

in Jesus' name can anyone claim to be baptising into Jesus' name, and for this he must stand upon Jesus' name as his authority to do so. He must realise and seriously comprehend that phraseology aside, or even if he uses no words at all, he always baptises as Jesus into Christ, in the Spirit unto the Father. The whole trinity is always involved in any true baptism; they engage and combine to bring men by the Son in the Spirit unto the Father.

3- THE TESTIMONY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS CONCERNING WATER BAPTISM

With all this in mind, we will search the Acts of the Apostles in order to find out how those original apostles and their contemporaries applied the command of the Lord concerning water baptism, recorded for us by Matthew in 28:19, and by Mark in 16:15. We will do this especially looking in the context for those occasions when the bestowal of the Holy Spirit was in any way connected with the rite they administered. Doing so, we find that there are eight such occasions: Acts 2.38 — Jerusalem; 8,12 — Samaria; 8,38 — the Gaza desert; 9,18 — Damascus; 10.47 — Caesarea; 16.15 & 33 — Philippi; 18.8 — Corinth; 19.5 — Ephesus. Pursuing our search we discover that upon five of these instances the Holy Ghost is

definitely linked in the text with the event taking place. Seeing this is so, and that there is no other inspired source of information, we may expect that upon examination these scriptures will enable us to arrive at certain conclusions concerning the truth we ought to know about baptism in water and Spirit.

1. The Day of Pentecost — Jerusalem (Acts 2)

The Lord's Baptism

There is no mistaking what Peter meant on the day of Pentecost. When people responded to the gospel, he commanded them to repent and be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Reading this account of the first administration of water baptism in the Christian era, we discover that although

Peter did not plainly say so, he meant that consequent upon their obedience to his command to be baptised and as a direct result of it, they could expect to receive the Holy Ghost. Whether some received the Spirit before water baptism or none received until afterwards is not clear, nor at this point does it much matter. What Peter is doing here is moving out into the glory of the New Covenant and boldly making promises in a way not possible before; he is pioneering.

Excluding the Lord Jesus Christ, not a man in Israel, including Peter himself, received the Holy Spirit at Jordan; John had made no such promise as Peter was then making.

Reception of the Holy Ghost was not made dependent upon being baptised then, and neither did the apostle make it so in his day. Neither John Baptist nor Christ nor any of the apostles made water baptism the

condition for reception of the Spirit. Water baptism is always to be found in scripture as a response and confession of faith, as here, never as a means to the end of Spirit Baptism. Suffice it for us to observe that Peter did not definitely say 'Repent ... be baptised ... in order that ye may receive'. The cardinal fact that emerges is that although this baptism incorporated into it, all the blessing which was available by John's baptism, namely remission of sins, it certainly is not John's baptism.

Figure of the True

When the three thousand were baptised on the day of Pentecost, they were baptised with Jesus Christ's baptism. Though invisible, He was there baptising together with His apostles just as He had been on earth earlier. The difference lay in the fact that during that time He had not baptised; they

alone had baptised and had done so in His name exclusively. There is no question of morality involved here. It was neither morally, ethically nor spiritually wrong for Jesus to allow baptism exclusively in His name at that time. He said that all His were the Father's and that His Father had given them to Him.

Wisdom and love restrained God from thrusting upon men things they could not possibly understand. Jesus kept the men Father gave Him during His earthly life, then at the end handed them over to His Father so that they should be Father's responsibility while He underwent death. In resurrection the Lord came again to His own and reformed the idea of baptism, placing it in its eternal context, elevating the water to be a visible picture of the invisible Spirit in which people were being baptised into His own

personal baptism. Before Calvary this was entirely unknown and could only at best be implied (and perhaps also in a measure imputed) but now it is a picture of an actual experience. Peter and those who we may reasonably assume, even though we cannot be sure, were co-opted with him into the vast operation of baptising all those people, knew that their own action was the least part of the transaction then taking place.

A New Name

Baptism now is really the occasion when the person being baptised is renamed. This is so, because at that time, if rightly administered, he or she has by God's intention been changed into another person by being baptised into Jesus Christ via His death and resurrection. Now such a thing could only be possible and hold any real meaning upon the condition that the person into whom the

other is being baptised is truly there within that name. It is not sufficient even though it be devoutly held, that in an official sense the ministrant be there in Jesus' name, that is in His stead, representing Him 'in absentia' only; the Lord Himself must be present also, or else the baptiser is only being officious; he is baptising in vain as well as in vanity.

In the Holy Ghost

Now it was for this reason that the Lord had to ensure unto men that the Father would send the Holy Ghost in Jesus' name. Ever since procuring this gift for men, the person of the Holy Ghost has been and is in (within) the name of Jesus. He has come in that name and will not do anything except in that name. Therefore when a person is baptised in the name of Jesus, that person is baptised in the Holy Ghost who has come from heaven and is now here in Jesus' name. This

being so, any person being baptised will be baptised into Jesus, because he has been immersed in(to) the Spirit of the Life in (of) Christ Jesus, He will at that time also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and as a direct consequence will immediately be regenerate. This then is what God intends us to understand by the ordinance being administered in Jesus' name.

The True Element

As has been previously said, Peter upon this occasion really told them to ... be baptised upon the name of Jesus, that is he was deliberately stating the ground or authority for baptism, which is into Jesus' person and into Jesus Christ's body. But even so, it must be thoroughly understood that whatever form of words is used, or if none are used at all, the whole is implied and intended. Therefore to bandy with words or

forms of expression is of no moment.

Baptism must be ministered: (1) in His stead, so that it shall be as though He Himself personally is the person officiating in the administration: (2) as into the Holy Spirit, who is now come in the name of Jesus (to be the element instead of water): (3) through Jesus' death and resurrection as it now is in the Spirit, into (unto, with a view to) His person and self, that is His nature and life and body.

All must be ministered with full understanding that what is being done is being done by the Lord Jesus, who is Himself present, that by this means He should add to His Church by baptising in the Spirit into Himself, The entirety therefore is in Jesus' name; they did it as and unto the Lord Jesus Christ in the same way some of them had

done whilst the Lord was with them on earth.

From a frank reading of Acts 2, it cannot honestly be doubted that with deliberate intention Peter both openly stated and also seriously implied to them all that they were to equate the gift of the Holy Ghost with the Baptism in and of that same Spirit. To believe or assert otherwise is specious pleading and makes nonsense of the context. More than that, it destroys truth and puts asunder what God has joined together, for the gift and the Baptism are two parts of one whole which was accomplished in one operation.

This is That

Peter quite clearly told the enquirers, 'the promise is unto you', and this promise cannot be any other than that promise

which he had mentioned in verse 33, and Jesus had made in chapter 1 verse 5. Upon reception by himself and his companions this promise had found such fulfilment that it produced in them 'this which ye now see and hear'. 'This' phenomenon, so Peter and the Holy Ghost claimed, was also the result of the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy concerning which they had yet earlier said, 'This is That' — verse 16.

Note: It is probably right to assume that because such vast numbers were involved in the operation, Peter co-opted some of his colleagues unto the work of baptising. This is most reasonable, for by the time events had run their course the day was far spent already, so it is therefore highly improbable that Peter and the eleven handled all the 3000 applicants twice, once for baptism in water and once again for Baptism in the

Spirit. If the still more improbable position be held that Peter did it all himself, the absurdity of a double handling is at once apparent. However, in the absence of literal proof it is better not to be dogmatic about it, but simply allow the improbability of double handling, acknowledging meanwhile that it is only tradition which prevents men from believing the possibility of water and Spirit baptism being synchronous, the former being the visual aid to the latter.

Signs Shall Follow

It is commonly considered among Bible teachers that Mark wrote his Gospel at Peter's dictation, so we will examine a statement made by him in chapter 16 verse 16. There is some degree of uncertainty and may be even some controversy about what the Lord intended us to understand by His use of the word 'baptised' here. Although

the text does not certainly say so, except water baptism be given unwarrantable powers, reason would have it that the Lord who is Reason can only be meaning Baptism in Spirit, whereas unbelievers have been baptised in water. Certain it is that the signs and ministry which follow believing, spoken of in verses 17-20, do not follow from mere water baptism. The only baptism from which signs follow is Jesus' baptism in the Spirit. Therefore since the Lord only spoke of one baptism, and only one is referred to in verse 16, it is a possible deduction and almost certainly follows that water baptism and Spirit Baptism were regarded by Him and the apostles as synchronous. No-one is unsaved because they are not baptised in water, but no-one is born again unless baptised in Spirit.

There is One Baptism

There can be no doubt that the baptism which Peter commanded unto the people on the day of Pentecost was in water. And since there is no further reference to, or use of the phrase 'the Baptism in the Spirit' (as a result of which all the apostles were fairly agog, glowing and flowing and bursting with Life), it can fairly be assumed that all the new converts were baptised in the Spirit when they were baptised in water. Certain it is that this is exactly what Peter meant to convey to them when he said, 'ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'.

This concept of truth is entirely consistent with the scripture in 1 Corinthians 10, wherein we are told that the Children of Israel were all baptised unto Moses. This took place in one baptism in the cloud and in the sea. The whole stated purpose behind the commandment to be baptised was that

they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The very way in which Peter phrased his instructions leaves little possible doubt that Peter intended and expected them to be baptised in the Spirit and who can deny that it happened synchronously?

The Promise is unto YOU

What Peter had said was that he and those with him were in the present and manifest experience of that which Joel the prophet had spoken, God the Father had promised, and Jesus the Lord Christ had shed forth. The Holy Ghost had come as they could see and hear. Those who responded with 'men and brethren, what shall we do?' plainly expected an experience comparable with that which they witnessed, didn't they? The man speaking to them was claiming to be indwelt by the Holy Ghost who had inspired the utterance they had heard, and he was

obviously under some great power other than his own.

They firmly believed their scriptures to be inspired of God, and here was a man interpreting them to their hearts as no-one else had ever done. He said that Joel's prophetic promises were being fulfilled in himself and his companions; but these were all millennial, weren't they? Or so they had been taught. But this Jesus whom they had crucified was the Messiah, they heard Peter say, and He had been raised up from the dead to receive the promise of the Father and shed forth this, and this was that of which Joel had spoken. This being so, they wanted it. So when the apostle said that they would receive the promise of Jesus' Father who had faithfully kept His word to Jesus that He would raise Him from the dead, they believed in that kind of God;

consequently they expected to receive all they saw and heard. If what they witnessed was the result of receiving the promise, and that same promise was unto them, then nothing short of an identical experience could possibly satisfy them.

The True Baptism

There is no reason to doubt that they received what they expected. Anything short of that would have seemed to them an imposture — a miserable deception — and indeed they would have been justified in thinking this, for from their history they knew that God had always proved His integrity by fulfilling His promises.

Faithfulness is God's righteousness. He loves to fulfil His word bountifully in a manner which is in keeping with His own fullness, so when conditions are right He just does it.

Unless Peter's personal experience, prophetic ministry and public exhortation on the day of Pentecost were wilfully misleading, and/or woefully inadequate, he himself knew that he was instructing men unto the one and only true Baptism in the Spirit. No present day minister of the New Testament speaking from Acts 2, and making reference to receiving the promise of the Holy Ghost, would so grossly betray the trust of the men and women to whom he may be speaking as to suggest or mean anything other than that people should be baptised with the Holy Ghost.

Ye Shall Receive

Although we know that on the day of Pentecost about 3120 people were baptised in the Spirit, only in the experience of the 3000 who were added to the original 120 is the correct relationship between water and

Spirit properly set forth. John records in his Gospel that Jesus says we must be born from on high of water and the Spirit. This is admirably demonstrated to us by the happenings on that day, for the 3000 were baptised in water and the Holy Ghost. If a period of time elapsed between immersion in water and the reception of the Spirit, it was so minimal that the point can only be raised as an objectionable quibble. In any case water is but the symbol of the Spirit; thereby they were added to the Church — all became one, for the baptism is one, only one.

That in order of thought and analysis of truth a logical procession may be discoverable in the foregoing does not mean that a series of disjointed steps or widely separated events is implied by God. It should never be preached as though by spiritual law

He intended it to be so in personal experience. In fact it cannot be so; all is synchronous. It ought also to be noticed that no such word as 'afterwards' occurs in the text, neither is there a hint of any kindred idea as though Peter intended them to understand that some length of time would or should properly intervene between water and Spirit baptism — 'be baptised and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'. The wording implies one operation.

Into Newness of Life

The age of the Baptism commenced dramatically on the day of Pentecost, with Jesus baptising the 120 in the Spirit. Each of these had been previously baptised in water, but not having been baptised in Spirit were not born again. Their water baptism had been an individual experience. Almost certainly it had been administered to each at

different times, but on the day of Pentecost by one act in one moment of time they were collectively baptised into and through the Lord's death into newness of life and were born from above. When they had been previously baptised in water, all they were taught to expect was forgiveness or the remission of sins, and that is all they received. But when they immersed the 3000, baptism had changed its meaning and use, and the apostles knew it. Calvary, because of which the Old Testament sacrificial system, as well as baptism, had been ordained, was now history.

Blood sacrifices and Temple worship were abolished by what took place at the cross, but not baptism. Baptism had come to remain, for its symbolism speaks of so much more than the death of birds and beasts could possibly portray. So because of its

serious weaknesses and limitations, the Old Testament had to be done away; but because baptism shows forth death, burial, resurrection and life in the Spirit, it may properly remain.

How right God is in all He does. What God wrought in Christ was established by Christ in the Spirit, and because all was wrought in Him, into Him must all be baptised who would know life and function in the body of Christ. Pentecost is as obviously vital to Calvary as the Holy Ghost is to Christ. The things of Christ's person can only be known by immersion into Him and then in the Spirit. So on the day of Pentecost the new Church era dawned as men and women were baptised in the Holy Spirit out-poured from on high. In one great comprehensive work of God, by total inward immersion in the Spirit they were both given and filled

with the Spirit and they visibly and audibly demonstrated that fact.

2. Samaria — Acts 8.

Passing to the next occasion when baptism is mentioned in scripture following chapter 2, we find that through Philip's preaching in Samaria, men and women responded there to the word of God, and came into great blessing. He preached the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ to such effect that God honoured and sealed the word with miraculous signs; the result was that many believed and received the word and were also baptised in water. But although this was so, and great joy abounded in many hearts, the greatest blessing of the gospel was not yet theirs, for they had not received the Holy Ghost.

A Limited Gospel

The Samaritan believers were in a peculiar state at that time. Their position was not greatly unlike that of many to whom perhaps this same Philip had preached with like results whilst the Lord Jesus was yet on earth. Referring back to that period, we find that much the same kind of things were happening to people under the limited gospel the apostles and disciples were ministering then.

During those days not very long past people had received and believed the word of God, either from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself or from the chosen twelve or from the other seventy He later sent forth. Consequently they had entered into the kingdom benefits which were then available to faith. It really made no difference who was preaching; miracles were wrought, demons were cast

out, the sick and the diseased and the palsied were healed, people believed, repented and were baptised in water in Jesus' name.

The Holy Ghost was not yet Given

Although the scripture does not say so, it can hardly be doubted that during the Lord's life on earth, all who were then baptised unto Him underwent the rite in Jesus' name. In fact if baptism had been granted to them as apart from the distinguishing name great confusion would have been spread among the people, for they had already been baptised of John. How then could a distinction be noted and difference be made between the two baptisms unless a distinguishing name and authority be introduced? The rite would have become a mere meaningless repetition of no moment,

a religious observance practised just for the sake of it.

Undoubtedly upon hearing the new message they had believed the things concerning the Kingdom of Heaven and the name of Jesus Christ and had consequently been blessed, healed, delivered, forgiven and baptised, and all without receiving the Holy Ghost. Therefore, in common with everyone else at that time, including the disciples themselves, although they were believers they were as yet unregenerate.

The reason for this is quite plainly told us in John 7:39 — 'the Holy Ghost was not yet given' (to the Jews). Just as plainly we are informed in Acts 8:15 & 16 that until Peter and John went unto them, the Samaritans had not received the Holy Ghost either, for He had not yet been given to that particular group. Despite the fact that Philip had

faithfully proclaimed Christ to them, and they had believed his message and had gone as far as they could in faithful response to what they heard, as yet they were spiritually unborn.

The Keys of the Kingdom

The reason for this is not far to seek. Years before this event, the Lord Jesus in the course of His ministry had, by promise, bestowed on Peter an honour which was to belong to him alone. By reason of this, Peter was given a functional position in the kingdom and gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which no-one else could fill.

The Lord makes His choices and distributes His gifts among us according to His will, with absolute justice. Everything He does is in love and we must with humility accept that it is quite impossible to alter the decision of

our Saviour-King. During His personal appearance and brief reign on earth, all the apostles He sent out did much the same things as each other. Occasionally the Lord would select a group of three from among the chosen twelve, and for reasons then hidden from their understanding, would take these with Him to certain places for purposes He did not always explain. From these three Peter was eventually singled out by the Lord and given a particular ministry; 'thou art Peter', He said, 'I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom', and that was final.

On the day of Pentecost, while fulfilling His promise to send the Holy Ghost to all His disciples, the Lord also kept His personal promise to Peter. That day the apostle received power and authority to use the keys to the Kingdom. From that time forward, to him alone belonged the privilege

of opening the Kingdom of God to the whole world of men.

.... and in Samaria

Reading carefully through this book, we find that from the very day the Lord inaugurated the Church, this is exactly what Peter did.

Because in him personally was vested this great authority, upon him also lay great responsibility. He alone had been given the keys so he must discharge his duty. With faithfulness he opened the Kingdom of God to the peoples of Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria respectively, and finally also to the Gentile nations.

Therefore, having already been the key man in Jerusalem and Judea, upon hearing of the Samaritans' response, by common consent of the Apostolate, Peter accompanied by John is sent to Samaria that he might be the

key man there also. Just because the Holy Ghost had not been poured out upon the Samaritans during Philip's ministry, they must not be denied their blood-bought right to be born from above.

These men had been chosen by God to be the foundation upon which He would build the Church. To them it was anomalous that people should believe and not receive the Spirit, or be dipped in water and not be baptised in Spirit also. Beside this, because the kingdom had not been opened to them, the Samaritan believers were neither in life nor in the Kingdom, and the fault was not theirs; it was simply because Peter, with his initiating ministry had not yet gone there. Therefore, upon hearing of the results of Philip's visit to Samaria, Peter was immediately sent from Jerusalem and

promptly went to fulfil his ministry to the Samaritans.

A Permitted Divergence

By this we see how incongruous it was to the apostles that people should believe God's word and be baptised in water, and not at the same time, or during the same period, be baptised in Holy Spirit. We also see that they did not hesitate to set about rectifying the contradictory situation. This they did lest a permanent breach be made between two things that God has joined together, and irreparable doctrinal harm be done to truth and the Church. Nevertheless we may be thankful that this thing happened so soon in the history of the Church, for through this unintended divergence from God's new pattern, an opportunity is granted us to observe the major difference between water baptism and Baptism in the Spirit.

It is as though by this the Holy Ghost has for our sakes sharply distinguished between things that differ. He is showing us that although the fundamental experience of the Baptism in (with, by) the Holy Spirit is graphically portrayed unto us by the action entailed in baptism in water, it is not to be confused with it. It must not be thought that because a person is baptised in water, he or she is therefore baptised in Spirit. Not ten thousand immersions in water could give a person the Holy Ghost, as though it were then and only then or thereby that a person is or can be baptised in Spirit.

So here the two events are kept distinctly apart, lest that which took place at Jerusalem should cause confusion, and by false emphasis spread error for ever upon this earth where error more readily finds acceptance than truth. What God did at

Samaria was for the benefit of the whole Church; perhaps not the least part of His reason for keeping these two things separate then, was for the sake of spiritual clarity.

For our Sakes

In 1 Corinthians 9.7-10, Paul sets out another aspect of the operation of this same principle telling us that what God did of old and caused to be written then, was written for our sakes. It was all historically true and beneficial for those people, but he was quite clear that it was recorded for our benefit also. But besides this there were other factors which, when taken into consideration, may explain why God dealt with the Samaritans in this particular way. We will not here investigate all the scriptural grounds with which we have been supplied, but remark only that there were certain

ethnic reasons which provided God with both a righteous ground and good opportunity to break down and set forth in an analytical manner this one Baptism He has instituted for both Jew and Gentile.

The Samaritans were not a pure race, but were a kind of 'in-between' people.

Originating from Gentile stock, with decadent Jewish religious and cultural habits superimposed upon them, they were consequently neither Jew nor Gentile, but had developed into quite a different race. The Lord therefore took advantage of the opportunity presented by the situation created by Philip's preaching among them, and used it to teach the Church some very important truth. In doing so He in no way deprived them of fullness of blessing, nor jeopardised their faith; they were brought

partially into truth by Philip and fully into it by Peter, and all by God.

Baptism in Holy Spirit is the important thing though, for apart from it, baptism in water in this dispensation has lost its chief meaning, Although other meanings it may still have, if it loses this, its greatest meaning, then all other meanings must ultimately vanish also. If it does not mean the Baptism in the Spirit, then soon it will cease to mean remission of sins and crucifixion with Christ, for these have only been made constant and of permanent value to us by the Christ in the Spirit.

An Insufficient Ministry

From Samaria Philip was directed by the Spirit to go down to Gaza where he ministered to a Gentile. There again we observe something somewhat similar to that

which took place earlier at Samaria. From the scripture which the eunuch was reading Philip 'preached unto him Jesus', with the result that the eunuch believed and sought water baptism at a convenient wayside pool. Naming but one condition as his ground for the administration of baptism to the eunuch, Philip immersed him in water, and having done so, was caught away of the Spirit to continue his itinerant ministry of the word elsewhere.

There is no mention of the Holy Spirit in connection with the eunuch at all, although like those who earlier believed on Jesus in Samaria under Philip's preaching, he was filled with joy. There was nothing wrong with Philip; he was obeying God and fulfilling his ministry as directed of the Spirit, but something was missing, for lack of which those to whom he ministered came short of

the fullest blessing of God. Philip was not to be blamed for that; God had not given him the keys to the Kingdom. He did his work thoroughly; there was no character deficiency in him; he ministered to the full extent of his gifts and calling within the will of God. But the eunuch was a Gentile, and God's will for the Gentiles as a whole is revealed in chapters 9 & 10. Philip's ministry was insufficient for this, even though his heart was willing to serve God to the utmost of his ability.

Peter was the man chosen and equipped to initially minister the person of the Holy Ghost as a gift to the Gentile world and open the Kingdom to them. The Kingdom is the Lord's and He had ordained it thus, and He abode by His ordination. What the limits of Philip's ministry were, or the extent of the eunuch's experience of grace under it

cannot be precisely stated, but in His all-wise, all-loving, all-righteous, all-gracious will the Lord both kept His promise to Peter and fulfilled His purposes for men also.

He came to Caesarea

It is an interesting piece of information that Philip eventually came to Caesarea, the very place chosen by God for the first revelation of what His purposes for the Gentile world really were. It was at Caesarea under Peter's ministry that God chose to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, to which fact Paul, the great apostle of Jesus Christ to all nations, faithfully and lovingly testified (Acts 14:27). So we see again that although the ministry of Philip the evangelist was signally blessed of God, it was nevertheless, at least at times, heraldic in nature, preparatory rather than consummatory.

The Gentiles Also

Upon arrival at Caesarea , Philip found that through the ministry of Peter, the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost, which provides us with much food for thought. But there was no jealousy among those early men of God; they all knew that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from God. They did not strive about the qualities and differences of ministries, but simply got on with their work according to their calling and measure. They knew that when a man receives a gift from God it does not automatically make him a greater man than he who has not received the identical or even a greater gift.

Gifts are entrustments; they are also guides to and gauges of men's spirit(s), for by their use they greatly test and prove the quality of the man who receives them. Of all the many

things given by God to men, none test and reveal him more than do the gifts of the Spirit. They are given to a man together with the office he may hold in the Church, and are his equipment and qualification for his calling. It must therefore be solemnly acknowledged that the establishing and recognition of that office, as well as his effectiveness among men, will depend largely upon the spirit and authority he displays in the employment of the gift(s) he possesses.

Towards the Ultimate Pattern

Whatever Philip's soliloquies or prayers may have been at that time (if we may presume to think that he engaged in one or the other or both) it is vital to a true understanding of his Lord's intentions for the entire age that we recognise the significance of what He did at Caesarea. What happened at Jerusalem

and Samaria is not set forth in scripture as the pattern to which we must adhere, or at which we must aim, for neither of those events is to be regarded as the norm.

The most fundamental age-abiding elements of truth are to be found in both, but because the setting of the first was purely Jewish and the second Samaritan, neither constitutes the ideal God-given, age-lasting order for the Baptism. They were partial, purposeful and limited. Quite deliberately God moved in prescribed ways upon those occasions. They only filled a little, even though it was a vital part, of God's universal provisions for men, for Jews and Samaritans only represent a tiny part of the human race. God dealt with them according to His righteousness and wisdom and then moved on to the greater world of the Gentiles. To observe His ways with these we must turn to chapter 10.

However, before we examine the Caesarean outpouring, we will pause awhile in chapter 9 to see what happened to Saul of Tarsus when God called and specially commissioned him to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

3. Damascus — Acts 9.

A Prepared Vessel

It is a precious thought that before God opened the door of faith to the whole wide world of men, He selected and started to prepare a man to send through it. Saul's conversion on the Damascus road was accomplished entirely apart from any human agency. In its elements it is an outstanding example of God's ways from the foundation of the world. As in the beginning of creation

it was accomplished by the light and word of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Reading the story, it becomes clear that although Paul certainly received light and instruction from above at that point, he did not receive sight and life from above until he was baptised in the Holy Ghost through the ministry of Ananias in the city of Damascus some days later. Using these words in a strictly literal sense, he was converted on the Damascus road, but was regenerated three days later in the city. This latter, we observe, took place in a house in a street called Straight, which fact cannot be without some kind of spiritual significance. Certainly it is a straightforward enough fact that he was baptised in Spirit well before he was baptised in water. What great preparations God made in the man when fitting him for his world-wide task.

4. Caesarea — Acts 10.

The True Pattern Emerges

Startlingly enough, upon turning to chapter 10, we find that this is precisely what happened when Peter initially preached (or rather commenced to preach) the gospel to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. Like Paul, their apostle chosen of God before them, all they who gathered to hear the things commanded them of God upon that occasion were baptised in the Holy Ghost some little time before they were baptised in water. According to Peter's later testimony at Jerusalem to the apostles, what took place in Cornelius' household was exactly the same as that which had happened at his and their own baptism in the Spirit at the beginning at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Beside being surprising, this new

departure from the original order is also a most absorbingly interesting fact of eternal importance as Peter and his companions well knew.

However, the great point of discovery for us now is that both with the apostle to the Gentiles and the first Gentile believers themselves, the order known to the earlier believers of Jewish and Samaritan origin was changed. Moreover, it was changed in such a way that we can do no other but believe that it was deliberately done by God.

The original practice was begun among the Jews as baptism in water as faith's response to God with a view to receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost (perhaps a synchronous event). This received form and accepted practice was continued among the Samaritans as first baptism in water, to be followed some time later by Baptism in Spirit

as a separate experience. But for some reason, which can no more be ignored than it can be denied, this order was reversed among the Gentiles to first Baptism in Spirit, followed by baptism in water. What a significant progression of truth as well as a reversal of order is revealed by these two events.

My Two Witnesses

Students of the Bible have discovered that numbers are used in scripture with special care and mathematical precision. The number two, for instance, bears relationship to witness, so we read that 'in the mouth of two witnesses every word shall be established'. Of old, at least two persons were required as witnesses to an event before anyone's word or allegations became acceptable as proper testimony, or could be established as legal evidence. By this means

also a thing is established and bears spiritual authority. As an illustration of this we only need to read Joseph's words in Genesis 41:32 'it is doubled unto Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God and God will shortly bring it to pass'.

We find then that concerning this matter of baptism the scriptures surely reveal a change of order tantamount to a change of method being introduced into the life of the Church by God Himself. It seems that in breaking out of the narrows of Jerusalem and Judea into the largeness of the uttermost parts of the earth, the Lord also broke with much that had already become traditionalism in the earliest days of the new-born Church. It can be neither accident nor coincidence that both the apostle to the Gentiles and all the members of the original Church established under Gentile authority

were baptised in Spirit before they were baptised in water.

Be not Entangled Again

Begging the question that may be asked, we observe that by doing this, God was evidently breaking with the limiting traditionalism and doctrine which had already grown up about the practice of water baptism. What He did at Damascus and Caesarea firmly placed it back in its true position, laying the emphasis where it should be laid and putting things into proper perspective. Water baptism had its beginnings and first became established in Judaism under an Old Testament prophet who could not minister the Spirit. This man's practice and limited doctrines had, without any discredit to him, become a precedent among believers and necessarily so, for they were right for the time. Why, even the Lord

Jesus Himself followed John's method, for it was of God.

The whole sprang from the fact that during that entire period the Holy Ghost was not available for man, either before or during or following water baptism. Therefore it can readily be grasped that the ideas in human minds governing the understanding and practice of baptism in the Church needed to be rearranged. They certainly needed to be taught of God about it, for among Church leaders the lesser had already become established as a necessary step toward the greater baptism. And this is not entirely surprising, for all those leaders were Jews by nature, with a most ready tendency to become traditionalised in their beliefs. But God would have none of it; He therefore struck out in a definite, if not a contradictory manner to rescue His Church. He would no

more have John's baptism than Moses' law or Abraham's circumcision made necessary or obligatory upon His people.

5. Ephesus — Acts 19.

Did Ye Receive the Holy Ghost?

The last reference of all to the Holy Spirit in connection with baptism in the Acts is in chapter 19. Again it concerns the founding of a Gentile church. It all commenced when Paul came to Ephesus and asked some twelve disciples that he found there whether they had received the Holy Ghost when they believed. Their answer was plain enough — they knew nothing of Him at all, not even that there was such a person. These men were John's disciples. They had been disciplined to John Baptist by the fervent

eloquence and ministrations of a man called Apollos.

This great man, as his master John before him, was a zealous missionary of the Lord, but not of the Lord Jesus Christ; he knew the word but not THE WORD. Whatever else Apollos had believed and consequently preached to these twelve at Ephesus, he had not at that time believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. Consequently the dozen Ephesians who had been baptised in water by Apollos did not believe in the name of the Lord Jesus, therefore they had not been baptised in His name. By this we see that at that time Apollos was nothing more than an Old Testament revivalist, and being himself unregenerate, could not bring men into regeneration. He had only converted men unto the improved form of Judaism

which was at first introduced and preached to Israel by John Baptist.

Sadly enough Apollos had zealously achieved the doubtful distinction of accomplishing two things:

(1) he had pushed the Gentiles into a revised form of Jewish traditionalism, now long discarded by God, binding them up in dead ritualism, and

(2) he had reversed the new order which God had established for the Church among the Gentiles. The result of this was the creation of a condition which, despite its Ephesian setting, is really Jewish. Indeed perhaps these men were of Jewish birth; most certainly they were proselytes to Judaism in its reformed character under John Baptist. They were not Christians at all, and the thing which proved that fact so outstandingly to Paul was that they had not

received the Holy Ghost. The apostle therefore speedily set about rectifying the position.

Into What were YE Baptised?

Paul's question in verse 2 is most revealing, and seems to provide a definite confirmation of the remarks made earlier about the Lord's statement in Mark 15.16. Whichever translation may be preferred, it is outstandingly clear that Paul expected men to receive the Holy Spirit more or less immediately upon first believing. The apostle's second question is perhaps more revealing still: 'Unto (or Into) what then were ye baptised?' These questions are deliberate and unmistakable.

It is impossible to believe that in his thinking, preaching and ministry Paul allowed any divorce between believing,

baptism, and receiving the Spirit. It was obvious and logical to him that a man believes and is consequently baptised into and unto something. If under John's ministry no allowance was made for believing unto repentance apart from baptism in water, then equally under the ministry of Jesus Christ's gospel there is no provision made for receiving eternal life apart from believing unto Baptism in and reception of Holy Spirit. Looking more closely into the literal Greek, we find that Paul said, 'John verily baptised baptism of repentance'. The primitive power of what Paul said is rather blunted by the words 'with the', which are introduced here for easier reading. We ought to allow the forceful language to reach our hearts without flinching; following his inspired style, we may say, 'Jesus Christ verily baptises baptism of Holy Spirit'. Paul was

saying very plainly that if people believed sufficiently in or on John Baptist to let him baptise them in water in the course of his ministry, they should as wholeheartedly believe in the Lord Jesus and let Him baptise them in Holy Spirit in the course of His ministry. So also should we.

Baptism is with a purpose, it is an instrument by means of which the Lord accomplishes His present ministry to us. Certain it is that none of these Ephesians were baptised in the Holy Ghost until Paul laid hands on them. Comparison of the records reveals that what had taken place previously when Peter preached at Caesarea also took place under Paul's ministry at Ephesus. Almost identical terms were used to convey identical ideas — the Holy Ghost came upon them, they received the Holy Ghost and spoke with tongues and

prophesied, all because they believed in Him of Whom John Baptist spoke, and were baptised in Christ's name into Christ's baptism.

One Baptism

Treating these Ephesians as Jews or proselytes to Judaism, Paul dealt with them in the matter of baptism in the manner formerly shown in chapters 2 & 8. This was quite correct procedure, indeed he could do no other. At Jerusalem Jews and proselytes had been baptised in water, and at Samaria also people who had been anciently proselytised were also baptised in water.

Responding to the apostles' doctrine the Ephesians were re-baptised in water as a confession of their faith in Jesus' name, who in response to that faith baptised them in the Holy Ghost. As has already been

suggested about the earliest administration of baptism on the day of Pentecost, perhaps immersion in water and in the Spirit were simultaneous in this case also. The record of it, when read in the original, reveals that there is no reason why we should believe otherwise.

Note: When viewed in the light of the new place that the administration of baptism in water held at this juncture of the Church's history, this truth is as deeply significant as anything yet revealed. An examination of Acts 19:5 & 6, shows that since the day of Pentecost there is no scriptural ground for believing that water baptism and Spirit Baptism need ever be separate experiences, nor yet that the order must be first baptism in water and then Baptism in Spirit.

The Visible and the Invisible

We read that when Paul had laid his hands upon them 'the Holy Ghost came on them'. The use of the aorist participle with the word 'when' purposely gives it a sense of reference to a past act, 'having done'. There is no grammatical reason to believe that it was other than an immediately past act such as would be necessary for the administration of water baptism.

Paul's act of immersing these Ephesians in water could have been synchronous with the Lord's action in immersing them in Holy Spirit. By this the One Baptism would have been both received and demonstrated at the same time, the water being the medium in which it was demonstrated before men, and the Holy Ghost being the member of the Trinity in Whom it was accomplished before (for) God by Jesus Christ. If this was indeed so, then upon this final occasion at Ephesus

the intention of God is plainly seen. In the cases of Paul the apostle to the Gentiles, and Cornelius' household — the first distinctly Gentile gathering the Lord had put the priorities right by baptising them in the Spirit before they were baptised in water.

Now we see the possibility that moving on yet further still, at Ephesus He put the two together that they may be seen as the one they really are. Truly they are one, being two parts of one whole (this is precisely what he wrote later to these same people, namely — 'there is one baptism') the one part visible and the other invisible, the invisible being the important experience.

The Gift — a Person

Reaching out to the Gentiles, the Lord brought together two things which had hitherto been apart — often widely apart —

and placed them in proper order and perspective. In the lives of the first apostles for instance, baptism in water and Baptism in Spirit were three or four years apart. In the case of the Samaritans we may rightly suppose that at least a few days, perhaps weeks, intervened between their Baptism in Spirit and their baptism in water, the latter preceding the former.

As we have seen, after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost these men, following Peter's leadership, still maintained the only order they then knew. They preached baptism in water as an immediate step of faith, to be followed later by Baptism in Spirit, as though this was the proper and only order. Moreover, as may be expected, this belief and practice has been incorporated into the teaching of vast sections of the Church, as though this is the

only and inspired order. The result has been that these two are still propagated as though they are intended by God to be two different baptisms, often widely apart in experience. A worse tragedy still is that in many cases the unimportant, or at best the least important part — water baptism — is thought to be the only baptism there is. Investigation proves that with the majority it is the only baptism that is known or believed in.

Thus conformity to what is genuinely believed to be the true pattern, combined with ignorance of what fullness lies behind the enactment, experience and exhibition of water baptism in this world has led multitudes to rest in that ordination. To this day many are totally unaware that water baptism is intended to declare unto men on their behalf that having been inwardly

baptised into the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they have thereby and therefore received the gift of the person of the Holy Ghost.

An Interim Provision

Throughout all this, it must be thoroughly understood that when these apostles baptised people upon the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, they did so in a special way. They had previously been given uncommon authority by Jesus to do so. When He came unto them in resurrection, He breathed on them saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose so ever sins ye retain they are retained'. No man may now baptise in this same manner, nor make the act of baptism so meaningful, for no man has the same authority.

It would be a completely unwarrantable assumption for any man to believe that apostolic succession carries with it any power or authority not included in the Baptism in the Spirit. The commission to remit or retain sins was given only to those men upon whom Christ breathed in resurrection in the exclusive interview granted to them before Pentecost for that purpose. They were special men — the apostles of the Lamb, who in the regeneration shall sit upon thrones judging the tribes of Israel. The Lord purposely did not include this ability in the Baptism in the Spirit because it was to operate for an interim period only, that is during the lifetime of those apostles. Since Pentecost — now the gospel can be preached in all its fullness — this is fulfilled in another way by

whosoever the Lord has promoted to the ministry.

6. Conclusion — Jesus the Baptist

A Synchronous Baptism

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

also at Ephesus Baptism in Spirit was coincidental with baptism in water.

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

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

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

In the second instance, as we have seen, the possibility as distinct from the probability may be inferred from the actual grammatical construction of the text. Having had all these

under consideration in the preceding pages, we will endeavour to draw some conclusions, doing so in a spirit of meekness, lest the puffiness of mere Bible knowledge take the place of and destroy the edifying ministry of love.

The Permanent Immersion

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

represents to the one he baptises, he gravely errs and does more harm than good to that person.

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

mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17 and Acts 19. Paul was no great water-baptiser, but he was certainly insistent upon the Baptism in the Holy Ghost.

Two Chosen Vessels

It is profoundly true that if a man be promoted to public preaching, his own personal experience will affect his whole ministry of the things of God to others.

Peter, the apostle to the Circumcision, came to Christ in a totally different way from Paul, and entered into understanding of the things of Christ in the reverse order from Paul, the apostle to the Uncircumcision. These men were complete opposites, each destined to play a vital role in the founding and raising up of the early Church.

From a reading of the New Testament it seems that Peter could never quite break

free from his Jewish heredity and traditional background. On the other hand Paul instantly saw and counted all Jewish traditionalism to be but loss. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why God, in His foreknowledge, chose Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles; his more liberal background of training in Tarsus was better preparation for his later ministry than the fishing grounds of orthodox Galilee, where Peter had spent his days.

This indeed could quite easily have been the reason, and if so it is not without precedent in the history of the Jews. The patriarch Joseph, for instance, spent years of preparatory training in a foreign land before he was allowed of God to minister to His people in Egypt. But however true that may be, it is at least observable from scripture that upon occasions Paul refrained from

baptising people in water, but evidently insisted that everyone to whom he ministered must experience the reality of which it is but a representation.

The Purpose of God

Accepting the indisputable truth of the evidence as facts, it emerges that:

- (1) it is God's greatest desire to baptise people in the Holy Ghost, and
- (2) if the ratio be adhered to, then obviously God regards speedy Baptism in the Spirit to be of far more importance than hasty baptism in water, for the differential is markedly two to one in favour of Baptism in the Spirit;
- (3) since God means what He records in scripture, then the important baptism for the Church age is that which immerses the spirits of men in the Spirit of God.

An Everlasting Covenant

The end of the preceding age was bound up with the appearing of Jesus Christ on earth for the purpose of putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Coming into the world, He spoke words which virtually ended the first covenant in order that He should establish the second (Hebrews 10:1-9). His life-span on earth marked the period of time which lay between the removal of the first covenant and the establishing of the second; during that period He finished all the work which remained to be done, finalising all by death and resurrection. Following this, He ascended to heaven and presented Himself in perfection to His Father in preparation for the commencement of the second or the new and everlasting covenant.

As the former age was drawing to its close, God sent John Baptist into the world to be

the forerunner of His Son Jesus. John brought in baptism with water as a means of forgiveness by remission of sins upon the condition of repentance. So we find the documents of the last days of the Old Covenant commencing with the introduction of water baptism. These documents are each one called a Gospel, for they set forth primarily the good news of Jesus Christ. At the end of His life, that is at the very end of the interim period, through death and resurrection He accomplished, brought in and established the true Baptism, later called by Paul (the) One Baptism.

Having accomplished this, Christ returned to heaven and inaugurated the new age by pouring forth the Holy Spirit. This was absolutely necessary, for it was in the Spirit that His own true, personal baptism had

been accomplished and is now for ever established for men.

Unto Newness of Life

Nothing is established in water as of itself. But if water be allowed its proper place and be given its true spiritual meaning, when used in baptism it will speak to us of greater things from God than those of which it speaks in ordinary use:

(1) By John's word the water represented the stream of remission of sins by which a soul may find forgiveness.

(2) By Paul's word it represents the immeasurable and unplumbable ocean of Christ's death and burial from which the person who is baptised rises to newness of life.

(3) (The whole spiritual meaning and content of which Paul writes and which

could not be typified in the baptism which John ministered, was put into baptism by Jesus, namely His own personal baptism into death, followed by His resurrection from it). By His work and ministry the water represents the Holy Spirit, into whom we all must be baptised in order that we may live in the eternal life of the Son. This He accomplishes in us by immersing us with definiteness and total despatch into all the particular work He accomplished for us when He was personally baptised into death and rose again from it, as being singularly and solely God-unique there.

Beside these things, water baptism carries other meanings as well, such as discipleship or personal allegiance to Jesus Christ, but these which we have considered are by far the greatest of them all.

Ye shall be Baptised

Jesus' own simple references to baptism should be regarded as of chiefest importance to every man. There are seven in all. Set out in order of statement they appear as follows:

(1) 'I have a baptism wherewith I must be baptised.' Luke 12:50.

(2) 'Are ye able to be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am baptised?' Mark 10:38.

(3) 'Ye shall indeed be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am baptised.' Mark 10:39.

(4) 'The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?' Luke 20:4.

(5) 'Go ye into all the world and (preach the gospel to) teach all nations, baptising them in(to) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, 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.' Matt. 28:19 & 20, (Mark 16:15.)

(6) 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.' Mark 16:16.

(7) 'Ye shall be baptised in the Holy Ghost not many days hence.' Acts 1:5.

Selecting some relevant phrases from this list, we arrive at the following:

(1) 'I must be baptised.'

(2) 'Are ye able to be baptised?'

(3) 'Ye shall indeed be baptised.'

(4) 'Ye shall be baptised in the Holy Ghost.'

Let us leave the other three words for the enjoyment of this moment of blessed realisation of what the Lord is saying with utmost simplicity. Jesus is telling us that He had to be baptised, and that the medium, element or means of baptism is the Holy

Ghost. Could anything be more plainly, honestly and simply stated? Primarily and therefore important above all else, the Baptism in the Holy Ghost is nothing other than being baptised with the baptism wherewith He was baptised.

Re-reading the phrases above, it is clear that what was uniquely to Him 'a baptism', became when He underwent it 'the Baptism'. First spoken with the indefinite article, baptism is afterwards referred to by Him with the definite article, thus: 'a baptism' — 'the Baptism'. What part of that baptism was exclusively His remains so for ever; that apart, the Baptism is now available to all believers, for He created it precisely so that it should become their (our) Baptism. It is an open door, an entrance, an experience by which we are

carried away into God, an immersion into a state of being not otherwise possible to us.

A Created Baptism

We see then how the scripture itself by its very language, bears witness to and sets forth what alone is 'the Baptism' and can do no other. Until it was created by God, this Baptism could not exist, for, except in the mind and will of God, it had no being at all until the Lord brought it into being. Although there are some outstanding typical illustrations of it in the Old Testament, no direct reference had ever been made therein to such a thing.

John Baptist, the man sent from God to minister water baptism, was the first one to make mention of Baptism in Spirit. He himself did not know what it meant, for he had no experience of it. He knew it existed

and said he needed it, but it was Jesus alone who spoke of this baptism with complete knowledge of it. At the time He did so, He could not speak of it as 'the Baptism' as when referring to John's baptism, for all knew John's, and perhaps all His followers had been baptised with it, but none knew His. He Himself had been baptised in water by John, but quite distinct from everyone else, He had not been baptised with John's baptism. He had no need of it, neither had He need of John in the role he filled to the rest of Israel. John's baptism to them was unto remission of sins upon repentance, but Jesus, having no sins, had no need of repentance; therefore He had no need of John's baptism in that respect.

John's mission to Jesus was in the capacity of forerunner and friend. Jesus only needed John's baptism as a means of identification

and presentation to Israel as: (1) Son of God, (2) Lamb of God, and (3) Baptizer in the Holy Ghost. His baptism at the hands of John was entirely different from everyone else's. That is why He said, 'I have a baptism wherewith I must be baptised'. He knew the real baptism had to be created by Him in order for it to exist as 'the Baptism' for us throughout this age.

The True Baptist

As John's ministry developed in Israel, he had become known as John Baptist.

Following His baptism by John and before Calvary Jesus became a baptist too (though only in the capacity John speaks of in chapter 4 of his Gospel). At that time John was the Baptist, Jesus was a baptist. Now the positions are reversed, John was only a baptist, Jesus is THE BAPTIST. Just as John in his day was the Baptist, so Jesus

Christ is now THE BAPTIST and John is not a baptist at all. Nevertheless, although his ministry has ceased, what was true under John's preaching is also true now under Christ's preaching — baptism is the way in. In the same way as John's baptism was quite useless unless there was true faith in the hearts of those he baptised, so Jesus' baptism is equally quite impossible unless hearts truly believe unto it. Just as John responded to faith by baptism, so also does Jesus Christ respond by baptism to simple faith.

Lo I AM with YOU Always

Just prior to His ascension to the throne, the Lord commanded His apostles to go and teach all nations, baptising them into that one name which is borne by each member-person of the triune Godhead — I AM. 'Lo I AM with you always, even unto the end of

the ages', He said; they only had to tarry until the age commenced. It was to be the age of the Baptism, so they must await the element or means in which alone it could be accomplished, the blessed Spirit. It is plain that the Lord intended to be with them in the Baptism He had commanded them to administer, so they entered into their ministry highly conscious of His presence with them. They were to use the only element they could use, namely water, and He would use the element He alone could and had chosen to use, namely Spirit. This is why, given the correct conditions, there is no reason why both should not take place together as one.

This is the real reason why baptism was administered by the apostles in Jesus name. It must not be thought that because in discharge of the commandment they

baptised in Jesus' name, they neglected to do it as He had so explicitly told them earlier. Their action does not imply gross refusal to do His will — rather their words and actions meant that doing it in Jesus' name they were actually standing on His promise. They believed that He was there with them and they became workers together with Him; they baptised into the name of all three persons of God, and He into His body and life. Which brings the whole into line with the truth as revealed in verses like Ephesians 2:18, 'through Him we (both) have access by (Gk.'in') one Spirit unto the Father.' Through Jesus' person and ministrations this is exactly both what it accomplished and how it happens.

Whom to Know is Life Eternal

These men had baptised in Jesus' name and presence whilst He was with them in the

flesh during the course of His earthly ministry, but not until He had made baptism 'the Baptism' could they baptise in the New Order. From that time onward they did not, as before, baptise in the name of Jesus alone, for that would have excluded the other two members of the being of God; with superior knowledge they baptised in the name of Jesus who was now able to baptise in Spirit into the triune God.

When they had baptised in His name earlier, He had not been able to do so, but now He could, so He commanded them to go beyond their former limitations and baptise into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. They were to do so now because they represented Him in a new way; His new ability became new ability to them also. Being born of the Spirit, they could bear the name which formerly they

only used, and bearing it could act in a capacity until then impossible to them. They could represent Him now more fully as they understood Him to be a Person and representative of the entire Godhead of which He is Jesus, but they all One God.

This is what He had definitely said to them: 'Lo, I AM with you'. In those simple words He had spoken out His conscious knowledge of His own personal eternal existence, and also the 'family name' of God unto all generations — the name which is the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The name of the eternal, conscious existence of the unique, original Being who is and was and is to come: ETERNAL LIFE. Into Him, into that, are we baptised when Jesus baptises us in Holy Spirit. As many as believe and are baptised shall be saved, He said, and He alone knows.

We therefore conclude that the baptism of John was indeed from heaven, for by it Jesus, the Son of God, came unto men as 'the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world', 'He that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost'. And if this be so, how much more is the Baptism of Jesus, the Lamb, the Son of God, from heaven also! We are informed that upon the occasion recorded in Acts 2, it was from heaven. What had until then been His unique Baptism became the unique inaugural Baptism of the New Covenant.

The last view we have of the whole subject of baptism as faithfully recorded in scripture is true to Paul's later statement to the Ephesians — there is ONE BAPTISM. All combines and is embraced in one; the lesser is absorbed in the greater and made an

illustration of it, which is as it should be. The age of Baptism is upon us!