

# A Permitted Divergence

by G.W. North

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*G.W. North explores the critical distinction between water baptism and Spirit baptism to uphold doctrinal integrity in the Church.*

**Scripture:** Acts 2:38, Acts 8:14

**Topics:** "Baptism", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

G.W. North emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between water baptism and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, noting that the apostles found it incongruous for believers to experience one without the other. He explains that this divergence in the early Church provided an opportunity to clarify the differences between the two baptisms, ensuring that the truth of God's word is upheld and preventing doctrinal confusion. North asserts that while water baptism symbolizes the experience of the Holy Spirit, they are not the same, and one cannot equate the act of immersion in water with receiving the Holy Spirit. This distinction is crucial for the Church to avoid spreading error and to maintain spiritual clarity.

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## Transcript

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.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/gw-north/a-permitted-divergence/>

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