

Did Ye Receive the Holy Ghost?

by G.W. North

Receiving the Holy Ghost is essential for spiritual growth and understanding, and is a direct result of believing in Jesus Christ and being baptized in His name.

Scripture: Acts 19:1

Topics: "Baptism", "Holy Spirit"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the critical connection between belief, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Spirit, as illustrated in Acts 19 when Paul encounters twelve disciples in Ephesus who had not received the Holy Spirit. He highlights that these men, having been baptized by Apollos, were still bound to a form of Judaism and lacked the understanding of Jesus as the Christ. North argues that true baptism must be in the name of Jesus and accompanied by the reception of the Holy Spirit, which Paul rectifies by laying hands on them. The sermon underscores the importance of recognizing the Holy Spirit's role in the believer's life and the necessity of being baptized into Christ's ministry. Ultimately, North calls for a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's work in the church today.

Transcript

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 discipled 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.

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