

Baptism in the Book of Acts

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Introduction

On a Sunday in May, 1968 this poor fisherman and footwasher stood before an altar in a church in our beloved Nebraska District on fire, exuberantly happy, and pumped up for his Lord, pronouncing a verbal exorcism of the devil, and pledging a lifetime of faithfulness in growth and service to the Gospel of Jesus—even if it meant, even unto, death. Remember your day? Did you feel the same? Everything was new and fresh and solid and strong and happy and content and confident. No one was more dedicated to and in love with the Lord than we. And then life went on.

On a Sunday in July, 1980 this poor fisherman and footwasher stood before a hotel table made altar in a mission station in our beloved Nebraska District and pledged with goose bumps and a look which only Luther could give to faithful use and administration of the Word and the Confessions. And when the hands were laid on the head, the mind was translated into seeing visions of Elijah's mantle laying on Elisha, and a power surge could almost be felt, and the sounds of Pentecost's unfelt wind and noisy rattling of Ezekiel's dry bones valley could almost be heard. Remember your day, your goose bumps, your Luther-look? On fire, exuberantly happy, and pumped up for his Lord, no one would ever be more faithful and dedicated to the Call and the Lord that had Called than we. And then the ministry went on.

Life and ministry will not be all highs, to be sure. But when they aren't; when the compliments don't come, when the hours are long; when it's Saturday night 10 o'clock and now it should flow; when it's one hassle or hassler after another; when our children ask us if it's another night of meetings and being gone and then don't even ask anymore; when our wives wait dinner, wait up, wait for..., and finally give up waiting; when we dread answering the phone; when we get owly toward and suspicious about everyone: when we think we can spot the elect and feel the best thing we can do at dismissing communicants from the Altar of Forgiveness is machine gun them down hoping to catch them in a state of grace; when we run out, are tired, have no more to give, are covering our tails, looking over the shoulder, fudging, fibbing, feel unappreciated, unfit, insecure, and too filthy to function in the "Holy Ministry" what do we do? Check the mail box for a certified letter? Buzz the DP and hint at leaving you 'Plan B' unprotected on the computer wires? Go golfing? Blame the last guy? Compare ourselves with Rev. Neighbor?

When things aren't new anymore the answer isn't a change or modification or stimulation or reformation of what we are, but, re-newal, re-creation, re-dedication of what we have become by the Spirit. And since the Spirit uses the "Means of Grace" we turn to, "...the means of grace (where) God offers the only stabilizer to strengthen feeble knees and provide a sure foundation on which to build one's destiny," (*The Stewardship Call*, Waldo J. Warning, St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1965; p. 27). "We should see our entire life in the perspective of our Baptism. That which you and I received through Baptism and the Spirit is not just another gift of life—it is Life, it is Christ, it is His Lordship. By the power of Baptism we are renewed and consecrated for the service of God," (*The Stewardship Call*, p. 21). "I know I keep twisting and squirming away from a personal Golgatha that means death to *my* choices, *my* decisions, *my* protective and indulgent care of self...It is the death of the 'I' and 'my' that Jesus demands, and

there can be now newness of life until human bodies become the temples of the Spirit,” (Theodore Heimarck, quoted in *The Stewardship Call*, pp. 23, 24).

Nothing will change inside of us, nor outside of us, until we are changed inside from the outside for the outside. Luther states,

For this (a daily Baptism) must be practiced without ceasing, that we ever keep purging away whatever is of the old Adam, and that which belongs to the new man comes forth... It is in us...from Adam, angry, hateful, envious, unchaste, stingy, lazy, haughty, yea, unbelieving, infected with all vices, and having by nature nothing good in it. Now when we come into the kingdom of Christ, these things must daily decrease, that the longer we live we become more gentle, more patient, more meek, and ever withdraw more and more from unbelief, avarice, hatred, envy, haughtiness. (Large Catechism, IV, 66,67)

How does Baptism help me...? ...In the first place you give yourself up...that is, you desire to die, together with your sins...In the second place you pledge yourself to continue in this desire, and to slay your sin more and more as long as you live...He accomplishes what you in Baptism have desired, namely that you may become free from sin, die and rise again...It follows, then, that Baptism makes all sufferings, and especially death, profitable and helpful, so that they simply serve Baptism in the doing of its work, that is, in the slaying of sin...God has given every saint a special way and a special grace for living according to his Baptism. But Baptism and its significance God has set as a common standard for everyone. Each of us is to examine himself according to his station in life and is to find what is the best way for him to fulfil the work and purpose his baptism, namely to slay sin and to die in order that Christ's burden may thus grow light and easy (Matt. 11:30) and not be carried with, worry and care. Solomon has this to say of it, “The toil of a fool only wearies him, because he does not know the way to the city,” (Eccl. 10:15). For even as they are worried who wish to go to the city and cannot find their way, so it is...all their life and labor is a burden to them, yet accomplishes nothing.” (L. W., Vol. 35, “The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism,” 1519, pp. 33-34; 39-40).

I didn't just want to review a doctrine without a felt need, without it being personal, without whetting a hunger and thirst for its application. So pardon my long introduction. Now, on to the doctrine, Baptism, as it's found in the Book of Acts. Luther said, “In Baptism...every Christian has enough to learn and practice all his life...” (Large Catechism, IV, 41). With this part of our life let's examine these iceberg tips:

Christ-Baptism

The Baptism of John

The Baptism “in the name of the lord” Acts 8:16

Baptism in the Spirit

I. Christ-Baptism

The verb, βαπτίζω, appears in Acts 21 times, and noun, βάπτισμα, appears 6 times.

Mueller writes, “Volumes have been written on the word βαπτίζω to the end that we can establish nothing definitely than that it means simply to apply water to wash,” (“The Development of the Baptismal Rite in the Christian Church, Wayne Mueller, 1975, p.l).

Essentially, then, to baptize means to apply water. Metaphorically it means to out pour.

Sacramentally it means to apply water in connection with God's Word of promise and ordinance.

Jesus used the word baptize in all three senses. Referring to the custom and ceremony of the

religious leaders Jesus said that they baptized hands and objects (Mk 7:4). In Acts 1:5 Jesus promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and in Matthew 20 and Mark 10 Jesus mentions the suffering, persecution and death to be outpoured on Him, one which the disciples would know later. Then, time and again, Jesus uses and refers to the blessed act of God carried out by men in us sinners in order that we might:

“...receive the two great gifts in Baptisms 1) an objective gift: the right relationship with God through the forgiveness of sins. There God reveals and declares to men that they are fully reconciled through Christ and that because of Christ’s work He loves them; 2) and there is a subjective gift: the Spirit empowers us from within (Eph 3:20-21). This is the effective power through which the Holy Spirit works and strengthens faith in the very forgiveness, love and grace which this “means of grace” declares and reveals. Through Baptism the Spirit is at work in a quiet power in our lives, conforming us to Christ and sending us out into the world in quiet service.” (“John’s Baptism and the New Testament Sacrament,” David A. Kohl, NA District/New England Circuit, 1989, p. 3).

This water and Word connected Baptism the Large Catechism calls, “Christ-Baptism”. Far and away from the “bath keeper’s” baptism, is a “Sacrament” where, “...water and the Word, by no means (are) separated from one another and parted,” (Large Catechism, IV, 22 & 27). Christ-Baptism is, “...therefore correctly defined as water comprehended in God’s command and connected with God’s promise of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation,” (Christian Dogmatics, John. T. Mueller, St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1934, p. 489).

“There is no Baptism without water,” (The Gospel of Baptism, Richard Jungkuntz, St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1968; p. 13). That is very obvious but that is also very beautiful. Luther commented, “If God were to bid you pick up a straw or strip a feather, and with it command, order and promise that through this act you could have forgiveness of all your sins, grace and eternal life, should you not accept that with great pleasure and in gratitude love it, praise it and esteem that straw or feather a higher and holier possession than heaven and earth?” (St. L. XVI: 2296). But it wasn’t straw, nor a feather. God’s act uses waters.

All living things have water in them. Our human body is 7/8 water. Nearly 3/4 of the world is made up of water. God created it. The Spirit hovered over it. Water gives life or it takes life. The flood killed and it saved. The Red Sea waters parted to save, and closed to kill (Ex 14, Ps 78). It waters the land, (Dt 8:7) and delights farmers, yet it mounts the battering rams of waves and terrifies sailors, (Ps 107). It was an integral part of ceremonies under the Old Covenant, (Lv 12:1-5; 15:16-27; 14:8-9; Nu 19:11-13). It was symbolic of spiritual cleanliness, (Ps 24:4, Ps 51:2,7). The wilderness Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple had the “bronze layers” and “molten sea” filled with water, (Ex 30:18-21; 1 Kg 7:23-26). The high priest did ritual bathing before his annual entrance into the Holy of Holies on the Great Day of Atonement, (Lv 16:4, 24,26). Levites were set aside from and for the people by a purification rite with water, (Nu 8:5-7). And prophets spoke of a great day of Spiritual water flow to and from God’s people, (Ez 36:25,27; Is 44:3; Zech 13:1; 14:8; Ps 46:4; Joel 3:17-18).

Luther points out the significance of the symbolism of water use. The German “Taufe” he says, “...comes undoubtedly from the word “tief”, and means that what is baptized is sunk deeply into the water ...We should therefore do justice to its meaning and make baptism a true and complete sign of the thing it signifies ...The sign must thus have both its parts, the putting in and the drawing out...” (L.W., Vol. 35, pp. 29-30). In Christ-Baptism something is put into us and something is pulled out of us; something comes into us and something comes out of us.

That’s shown us clearly in the Acts of the Apostles. While all of Scripture speaks to

Christ-Baptism, what all of Scripture says comes out in the Acts alone. Speaking by the Spirit and to men, women and children in Jerusalem representing the globe over, Peter said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call,” (Ac 2:38-39). Peter calls for a change and turn around of mind and heart in a spiritual way, μετανοέω. Then he offers Christ Baptism so that those sins could be sent away, or forgiven, ἀφίημι. This is offered to all whose ear drums were vibrating to the Word, and more importantly to those whom the Spirit was penetrating with the Gospel’s power to the very beat of the heart. This passage alone fits all the criteria for Christ-Baptism according to it’s commissioning Words. Jesus’ disciples were to, on their going way, makes disciples of all the inhabited world baptizing in and into the name of the only true God who has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

What definitely is so stressed throughout Scripture and here in Christ-Baptism is that the true God is active in our salvation and we are passive recipients. Luther stresses that we are, “...baptized into the name of God...by God Himself...Here, then, we must not estimate the person according to the works, but the works according to the person, from whom they must derive their nobility...” (Large Catechism, IV, 10,12). Only God has the strength and ability to produce a change in our dead hearts and take our sin and send it away, hurling it into the deep (Mi 7:18), into the sea of Jesus’ blood, putting up a sign, “No fishing!” (Corey Ten Boom).

Luther again, “Therefore there is no greater comfort on earth than Baptism. For it is through baptism that we come under the judgment of grace and mercy, which does not condemn our sins but drives them out by many trials. There is a fine sentence of St. Augustine which says, ‘Sin is altogether forgiven in Baptism; not in such a manner that it is no longer present, but in such a manner that it is not imputed,’” (L.W., Vol. 35, pp. 34-35). That’s what Peter spoke of, and that’s what the Spirit used on about 3,000 that Pentecost day as they were made to accept the message and were baptized. The people in Samaria and the Eunuch (Acts 8) received the same. When the scales fell from Soul’s eyes, Ananias baptized him (Acts 9:18), and that by Jesus’ own command, as Paul gives testimony to his conversion. “...Get up be baptized and wash away your sins away...” (Acts 22:16). When the Word and Spirit came upon Cornelius and his house, Peter “ordered” that they be baptized with Christ-Baptism, (Acts 10:48). “The Lord opened,” Lydia’s heart and she and her household were baptized in Philippi, (Acts 16:14). The jailer, in the same chapter, terrified by the letter of the Law that kills, believing in his sin, seeking life, heard Paul, “...proclaiming the Gospel to him without any condition attached to it ...unqualifiedly: ‘Believe on the lord Jesus Christ,’” (*The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*, C.F.W. Walther, St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1897, p. 131). Then he and his household were baptized. Acts 18:8 says, that, “...many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.”

There you have it in Acts, Christ-Baptism. It is a God-act that saves, (Mk 16:16; 1 Pe 3:21). It is a God-act that is a washing of rebirth, (Tit 3:5; Jo 3:3,5). It is a God-act that clothes us in Christ and makes us God’s children and heirs, (Ga 3:26,27), buries us and raises us with Christ, (Ro 6:3f), and so assures of forgiveness and washing away of sins, Acts 2:38, 22:16. Jungkuntz beautifully testifies when commenting on Romans 6:

“After Baptism as before, what is bad is still bad tin human history) and what is sad is still sad. And of all the grotesqueries of history and of human existence in history, death is the ultimate—of them all the most absurd, most meaningless, most horrible. But precisely through death, that is, through having been buried with Christ by baptism into

His death, the Christian has entered into God's victory at its deepest source and for that reason at its most hidden point. Therefore the cross remains for now the only mark of victory, though to the eye of faith its surest sign for the Risen One is no other than the Crucified... Baptism brings past, present and future together into one focal point, but a point which in turn embraces and determines the whole of our existence. 'If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,'" Rom. 6:8. Our Christian existence derives from the past fact of death, the death of Christ that became our own in Baptism ("we have died"); faith is God's present and ongoing gift to His baptized ("we believe"); and the life imparted in Baptism belongs to the future ("we shall...live"). (Jungkuntz, *The Gospel of Baptism*, pp. 64-65)

Christ-Baptism has such power and effect because it is of God. That is why we subscribe to the Confession that says: "These two parts, to be sunk under the water and drawn out again, signify the power and operation of Baptism, which is nothing else than putting to death the old Adam, and after that the resurrection of the new man, both of which must take place in us all our lives, so that a truly Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, once begun and ever to be continued." (Large Catechism, IV, 65).

One addendum to Christ-Baptism in Acts. The "family baptisms" of Acts 16 and 18 should not go unmentioned as to ample proof that what God commanded for whole populace was carried out. The church father, Baier, states seven Bible reasons for Baptism of infants.

"That infants are to be baptized, is plain from the testimony of John 3:5, and Mark 10:14, taken together thus: 1. Whom Christ desires to come to Him for salvation, but who cannot attain to eternal life in the ordinary way except through the medium of Baptism, upon these Baptism should be conferred, as the ordinary means, and to them it should not be denied. But, Christ desires infants to be saved (Mark 10:14)... 2. Whom Christ desires to be brought to Himself, that they may enjoy His spiritual blessings, they are to be brought to Him by Baptism as the ordinary means. But Christ desires infants to be brought to Him, that they may enjoy spiritual blessing (Mark 10:14). Therefore, 3. the command, Matt. 28:19, to baptize all nations, is properly extended to infants also, who constitute a portion of all nations. 4. The examples which show that whole families were baptized, e.g., Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16, are properly believed to embrace infants, who doubtless constituted a part of the families. 5. Add also the analogy of circumcision, which was administered to infants; and, 6. That, as the promise of the covenant of grace, Acts 2:39, belongs to infants, so also does the seal of the covenant, which is Baptism. Finally, 7. As the whole Church is cleansed by the washing of water through the Word (Eph. 5:26), this properly refers to infants, also, for they too, although unclean by nature, are nevertheless to be engrafted into the Church." (Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Heinrich Schmid, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1899, p. 548). (**Note: Appendix #1, is a brochure on infant Baptism based on this quote).

II. The Baptism of John

Christ-Baptism is of God. What about John the Baptist's? Jesus shut the mouths of opposition with the question, "John's Baptism where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men? (Mt 21:25). Jesus demanded an answer, "Tell me!" (Mk 11:29). As we give answer, what will we say? Sure it was from heaven, but was it the same as what we've been calling Christ-Baptism?

Jesus refers to John's Baptism in Acts 1:5, "For John Baptized with water," and seems to

distinguish between another Baptism, “but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Then we run into the Jew from Alexandria named Apollos who had come to Ephesus in Acts 18:24. He knew Scriptures, and had learned the Way of the Lord, and being instructed, spoke with great fervor about Jesus. But it says, “...he knew only John’s Baptism.” Acquilla and Priscilla instructed him and he stayed in Corinth. Paul, though goes to Ephesus, where Apollos had been and then returned and finds a whole group of disciples, as the Bible calls them, who had not received the Holy Spirit because, as they said, “We have not even heard there is a Holy Spirit,” (Acts 19:2). They had received John’s baptism, though, and so Paul says: “John’s Baptism was a baptism of repentance.” (v. 4) Then telling them the whole truth, and the whole truth about Jesus, we’re told, “They were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.” Note the Bible doesn’t say that Apollos was “re-baptized” it does say that those Ephesians were!

Why the difference? In one case, Apollos, there was true and saving faith in the true and saving God and Savior, and essentially John’s Baptism had given and underscored the same. In the other, the Ephesians, there was a mixed up faith in an incomplete God and incomplete Savior.

Why? Let’s examine John’s Baptism, and keeping in mind a comparison with Christ-Baptism. Early in Jesus’ ministry when He talked with the night visitor Nicodemus, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,” (Jo 3:5). At that point John was baptizing. What John wasn’t doing, was a proselyte baptism, the initiation baptism into an Old Covenant bond with God’s people. Mueller writes, “The Jewish proselyte baptism seems to have developed about a hundred years before Christ. It was in turn taken from the many pagan ceremonial washing rites prevalent at the time... Instruction preceded the proselyte’s reception as a convert to Judaism ...There were lessons on the Ten Commandments, and on duties, privileges, rewards and penalties of the new faith...Jeremias quotes one of the Jewish oracles: ‘Bathe the whole body in ever-flowing streams and reach your hands to heaven, praying forgiveness for those things that you have done,’” (“The Development of the Baptismal Rite in the Christian Church, pp. 1-2).

No doubt the converted Eunuch of Ethiopia had had such a baptism. But when he understood Scriptures concerning the Christ, he requested to be baptized. Proselyte baptism was not John’s.

Nor was John’s baptism that of some Jewish piety groups existing from around the second century B.C. Jungkuntz:

Best known of these groups would probably be the Essenes, whose beliefs and customs were described by the first-century Jewish historian Josephus. Closely related, if not identical with Essenes, were members of the Qumran sect which produced the now famous Dead Sea Scrolls. Archaeological excavation of the monastery ...at Khirbet Qumran has uncovered great cisterns that seem appropriately designed for ‘baptismal’ purposes...ritual baths were a characteristic feature in the discipline of these and similar factions of Judaism in the first century...they emphasized the need for penitence and submission to God’s will if their waters of abulation were to achieve any real effect. ‘Only by a spirit of uprightness and humility can his sin be atoned. Only by the submission of his soul to all the ordinances of God can his flesh be made clean. Only thus can it really be sprinkled with water of abulation. Only thus can it really be satisfied by the waters of purification.’ (Manual of Discipline III, 12. T. H. Gaester, quoted in *The Gospel of Baptisms*, p. 37).

(Appendix #2, attached, is a very concise explanation of the past and present Jewish concept of

baptism. “Ritual Washings and Baptism” by Rich Robinson appeared in Volume 3:5751 of *The Jews for Jesus Newsletter*. Let’s do a quick overview up through John’s Baptism).

Now, back to the issue at hand. I personally believe that the Ephesians baptized “by John” had gotten mixed up in some unique sectarian group like the Essenes or those at Qumran. Perhaps a pocket of separate “John-ites” not knowing the full message of John either, but striving for a piety and godliness they thought John’s brand of baptism—as they knew it—offered.

How could this happen? I suppose it would be somewhat akin to being involved with a group like in Loveland, Co. called Resurrection Fellowship, Pastor John Stocker, or the followers of Jimmy “the swaying” Swaggert. Recently on a Sunday night, late, I flipped on Jimmy and listened for a whole half hour. He spoke of victory in the Lord like Jonathon over the Philistines. In that whole time I heard the name Jesus once, and that only at a pregnant pause, and that only as an exclamation, “Praise Jesus.” Again, a late night flip, aired Stocker, who gathers 3-5,000 a week in from Colorado, Wyoming, the pan-handle of Nebraska and Kansas (including some former members of St. Peter, Ft. Collins, one of which is a graduate of NELHS). Stocker was talking about prophesying and confession (as in giving statements of faith). He sarcastically put down those who take Scriptures, put them into books, like Catechisms, and have the people memorize them and spit them back out. His confession seemed to involve Scriptures, yes, but mostly the Spirit’s leading to one’s personal confession from one’s own lips as the Spirit might give utterance. Again, godliness and religion and high spirituality but the name Jesus? Once or twice at the most, again as an exclamation point. Paul put it this way, “(they have) a form of godliness but denying its power,” 2 Ti 3:5.—John’s baptism was not a Christless attempt at piety.

John was called as Forerunner, (Mal 3:1 and Is 40:3). Jesus called him the greatest prophet ever, (Mt 11:11), yet he was the first to say that he was unworthy to carry the sandals of the One following, the One about whom was his message—the *Christ*. His father, Zechariah, understood from Gabriel that John was sent of God to fulfill prophesy and to prophesy a message that would, “bring many people back to the Lord their God, (Lk 1:16). John says, that John was “sent from God,” (Jo 1:6). His message and baptism was for “repentance” (Mt 3:2) μετανοέω. And with this baptism of repentance would also be the forgiveness of sins (Lk 3:3, Mk 1:4) ἄρσις. Blessings in Christ and John-Baptism are essentially the same: repentance, forgiveness, Kingdom of God. A difference does exist in that, as John said, “I baptize, you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, “ (Mk 1:8). “When John contrasted ‘I baptize’ with ‘He will baptize’ he was acknowledging that he is simply an instrument in the hand of God,” (Kehl, “John’s Baptism and the New Testament Sacrament”, p. 6). Ylvisaker says, “(John’s) purposes is (not) to draw a comparison between his baptism and the baptism of Christ, rather it is a comparison between his person and the person of Christ. He acknowledges that he is simply an instrument in the hand of God, and that his own strength is sufficient only to pour the water in baptism, but that Christ is able, by virtue of His own divine power, to confer even a baptism of the Spirit and a baptism of fire,” (*The Gospels*, John Ylvisaker, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1932; p. 112).

So, Apollos rejoices to hear of things like the Lord’s Supper, the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost. The Ephesians had been misled, and not even knowing the Spirit, had no Trinitarian Baptism. Apollos’ was sufficient. The Ephesians wasn’t.

Armin Schuetze, in a response column of old *Northwestern Lutheran* days, called, “A lantern to Our Footsteps,” responded to the question, ‘Is John’s Baptism Different?’ He wrote: The baptism of John, the forerunner of Christ, looked ahead to Him who was coming,

who would die for the sins of men, Christ Jesus. When Christ came, suffered, died, and rose again, this baptism that looked ahead came to an end. Jesus then instituted the baptism as we know it now... The baptism commanded us by Christ consists in using the earthly element, water, in a ceremonial manner. John, too, baptized with water. While we are not told the formula that was used by John when he administered baptism, it is apparent that he must somehow have directed the people to Christ, whose forerunner he was... It was the means whereby man was reborn and entered into the Kingdom of God; for Jesus, speaking of John's baptism, said; "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God," (John 3:5). So John's baptism, too, brought the blessings of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation ...While John's baptism then looked ahead to the coming of Christ, was in use only temporarily, and was replaced by the baptism commanded by Jesus, it nevertheless in all its essential parts was the same and served the same purpose as does our baptism today." (NWL, Vol. 48, February 26, 1961).

Of John's Baptism we could say, then, "We have, therefore, no greater jewel in body and soul, for by it we are made holy and are saved, which no other kind of life, no work upon earth can attain," (*Large Catechism*, IV, 46).

III. Baptism "In the Lord's Name"—Acts 8:16

As the Church followed the plan of the Lord in reaching out from the center of Jerusalem and Judea, like rings that ripple from a drop on a pond, the Word reaches and disciples are made in Samaria. There are a lot of stumbling blocks in the way of the Way, like Simon with his mercenary hype, but one thing is sure, the Gospel and Gospel in Baptism produced believers. Luke records, "When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus," (Acts 8:14-16).

At first impression, it sounds as if these Samaritans had a lesser type of baptism, one which seemed to hinder further Christian growth and the extraordinary signs that accompanied the establishment of the New Testament Church. But examination proves otherwise. The same phrase: εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ used in 8:16, is the exact phrase used in Acts 19:5. The Samaritans who came to the light of the truth were given a Christ-Baptism. Like Apollos, baptized of John, and of whom it was never said he was "re-baptized", so it is here with the Samaritans. They are not "re-baptized", as if a sub-beneficial baptism was keeping the extraordinary gifts from these.

Let's turn to some main stays on our shelves:

Lenski: "They had been baptized as believers, they had received Word and sacrament and all that Word and sacrament bestow, the Holy Spirit in their hearts, and thus regeneration, conversion, justification, the power of a new life, in word, salvation. They had received the supreme gifts of the Spirit "only", but these are invisible. Baptism was the the one gift that was also an outward mark of their having the Spirit." (*The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles*, R. C. H. Lenski, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934, p. 325).

Kretzmann: "The Samaritans had been baptized, and therefore they were in full possession of the pardon of God, as well as of the Spirit that sanctifies, Mark 16:16; Acts

2:38. But now (after Peter and John's laying on of the hands) they were equipped with extraordinary gifts... to give other peculiar evidences of the Spirit's omnipotence and divine majesty," [quoting Luther, 12:143], (*Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament*, Volume 1, St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1921; p. 571).

Franzmann: "When we are told of the Samaritan Christians: 'They had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus,' we should not take this to mean that they had been lacking in some gift essential to being a Christian, and that with the reception of a charismatic gift they had now become full, genuine Christians. On the contrary, they had received the absolutely essential gifts of the Spirit when they came to faith and were baptized. The 'simply' points to their receiving an additional, visible gift through which God signified that they were members of the same spiritual body, the church as were all Christians elsewhere," (*Bible History Commentary, New Testament, Volume 2*, Werner H. Franzmann, Milwaukee: 1989, p. 1229).

We can feel a very close tie to these Samaritans. Their baptism is ours and ours theirs. Even without the same outward gifts they had bestowed, we share many others. And the Spirit gives them all. Mind you, He does give them!

IV. Baptism in the Spirit

From James D. G. Dunn's book, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, I copy the times that Luke mentions in the Acts a reference to the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, or what we could call, Baptism in the Spirit.

2. The Phrases used by Luke to Describe the Coming of the Spirit in Acts:

- (a) βαπτίζεσθαι ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ 1.5; 11.16
 - (b) (ἐπ) ἔρχεσθαι τὸ πνεῦμα ἅγιον 1.8; 19.6
 - (c) πλησθῆναι πνεύματος ἁγίου 2.4; 4.8, 31; 9.17; 13.9, 52 (ἐπληροῦντο
 - (d) ἐκχέειν ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος 2.17, 18, 33; 10.45 (ἐκκέχυται)
 - (e) λαμβάνειν πνεῦμα ἅγιον 2.38; 8.15, 17, 19; 10.47; 19.2
 - (f) δίδοναι πνεῦμα ἅγιον 5.32; 8.18 (δίδοσθαι); 11.17; 15.8
 - (g) ἐπιπτειν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον 8.16; 10.44; 11.15
- (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970, p. 70).

Phrases such as these seem to throw some Christians into a spiritual spin, of levels of baptism. I picked up one book entitled, "*The Spirit Himself*," by an R. M. Riggs. In a chapter entitled, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit, How to Receive it," there are sections like We Must First Be Saved; We Must Obey; We Must Ask; We Must Believe; The Apostles Prayed and Praised; Samaritans Believed and Were Prayed For; Ephesians Believed and Were Prayed For...and the chapter ends with the words, "As you took forgiveness from the hand of the dying Christ, take your share of the Pentecostal gift from the hand of the living Christ," (*The Spirit Himself*, R. M. Riggs, Springfield, Mo.: The Gospel Publishing House, 1949; pp. 101-120).

Those "steps" we might expect coming from an Agnes Oxman, who received the laying on of hands on January 1, 1901, started a Mission on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, and gave start to a movement of "Full Gospel" (meaning spiritual gifts besides mere salvation). This is also called the Foursquare Gospel, whose four points are: 1) entire sanctification; 2) Baptism of the Spirit with tongues; 3) Faith healing; and, 4) Pre-millennialism. ("Baptism of the Spirit", Kenneth

K. Miller, 1971 essay to the convention of the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation).

But, there are also Lutherans throwing their hats into the Pentecostal ring. Laurence Christianson, a Lutheran I believe, writes: “Beyond conversion, beyond assurance of salvation, beyond having the Holy Spirit, there is a baptism with the Holy Spirit,” (Laurence Christianson, “Speaking in Tongues, p. 37, quoted in *Holy Spirit Baptism*, Anthony A. Hoekema, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972; p. 11). Defined, then, is such a version of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Assemblies of God expect such a baptism. Their “Statements of Fundamental Truths” states, “The Baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues...” (Article 8).

It seems to me that most who define Baptism in the Spirit as an outpouring of these supernatural gifts and happenings forget almost entirely John 15:26, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who goes out from the Father, *he will testify about me.*” At best Jesus takes a back seat to these “gifts”, to the Spirit, and to the emotions that run high. At worst Jesus is clouded out, edged out by the devil who can’t change that our Lord lived, died and rose, who can’t keep some people from religion, so he gives them a Christ-less, Jesus-less, wrong religion. Remember the Ephesians? V. C. Pfitzner put it this way, “We do not understand the role of the Spirit in Acts if we contrast His work with that of Christ, or see it as going beyond Christ and His Work,” (*Led By The Spirit*, Victor C. Pfitzner, Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1976; p. 47).

It also seems clear to me that descriptive is made prescriptive. Miller asks some good questions: “Why specialize in tongue speaking? Why not poison-drinking, snake-handling and devil-expulsion?” (Baptism of the Spirit, 1971, LCR essay). Douglas Judisch makes a pertinent point:

“Here was the crowning sign of the apostolic office—not only to be able themselves to prophesy and speak in unlearned tongues and heal miraculously, but also to be able to commit these powers to others through their hands or even their very presence... the apostles did not bestow prophetic gifts on others or even use their own special gifts when such action was unnecessary to confirm their authority. Paul, for example, used his miraculous powers neither to remove his own “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:87-9) nor to heal his co-workers Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23), Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20), and, Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-3) of their ailments.” (*An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts*,” Douglas Judisch, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978, p.36).

Such gifts were marks of apostleship. Crysostom said that such things used to occur, “but now no longer take place.” Augustine also, “These were signs adapted to the time, for there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening and it passed away.” (Miller, LCR essay). When the apostles left so did they.

To resurrect them, to take steps to achieve or receive them—this Baptism in the Spirit—deserves a sound anathema. Bruner gives ones “The moment any rite, any obedience, any experience, no matter how buttressed with Scripture or with ‘angels from heaven’ becomes a supplement to faith or a condition for fullness before God, then, the anathema must be announced and the warning to avoid false teaching urged with all possible seriousness,” (*A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, Frederick Dale Bruner, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1970; p. 282). And for that reason we have cause to rejoice that Jesus no longer bestows all the gifts he once did upon the church. “Thus the gifts Christ is still showering upon His Church are more than sufficient to our needs in these last times. We have every reason indeed to rejoice

...since their cessation proves that he really has accomplished once and for all the task of the promised Messiah. The absence of these gifts today assures us that all salvation is truly ours and that its full revelation draws nearer day by day," (*An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts*, Judisch, pp. 71-73).

So, what is the Baptism in the Spirit? It's repentance and remission of sins. It's putting in and drawing out. It's taking off and putting on. It's drowning and rising. It's dying and living: It's *the* gift and it's other gifts. And it's all done by the Paraclete who calls us to His side, as He did 3,000, the Samaritans, the Ethiopian, Lydia and family, the Jailer and family, Apollos, and the Ephesians, and putting His arm of love and power around us He points us to the cross and slightly used tomb and makes it clear:

"The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew of it, then it would be in vain and lost. That this treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us." (Large Catechism, III, 38).

Conclusion

Luther wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to the riches of His mercy has preserved in his church this sacrament...For He desired that by it little children, who were incapable of greed and superstition, might be initiated and sanctified in the simple faith of His Word. But Satan, though he could not quench the power of baptism in little children, nevertheless succeeded in quenching it in all adults, so that now there are scarcely any who call to mind their own baptism, and still fewer who glory in it..." (Babylonian Captivity, L. W., Vol. 36, p. 57). God, make us children!

The older we get, the smarter we are, the stronger we become, the more we will be what we are, and what our environment makes us. "Graspers powerfully resist being grasped by God. Controllers are inherently incapable of yielding control to God. Manipulators strongly reject being shaped by God. Information gatherers are structurally closed to being addressed by God. Information takers have extreme difficulty being receivers. Frenetically functional activists find it extremely difficult to 'be still and know' that God is God." (*Renewal for the 21st Century*, Waldo J. Werning, St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1988; p. 39). O dear God, when will we learn that there is no greater weakness than being tough, that there is no greater stupidity than thinking we know everything, that there is no greater helplessness than to be self-sufficient, that there is no surer way to self-defeat than to think that success and victory are up to us, that there is no surer way of forfeiting our blessings than to complain about the ones, positive or negative as we see them, that we have? Forgive us. Empower us. Re-create us. Renew us. Baptize us!

To that end, Lord, make us keenly and constantly aware basic conditions of renewals:

God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. This involves confession of God the Father as Creator and Giver of all things, recognition of Jesus Christ as Savior and the Head of the church, which is His body, and praying for the power of the Holy Spirit to magnify the name of Jesus among us. *Baptism!*

The holiness of God, His justice and His love. *Baptism!*

The depravity of the entire human race. The need for daily repentance for sin, also the recognition that we have broken the law and fractured our relationship with God.

Baptism!

Full and free forgiveness in Christ through the Gospel; God's eternal plan of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Faith is not a good work. There is a need for a correct understanding of conversion and regeneration—that there are no steps in conversion and that conversion is not just a reforming of the outward life. *Baptism!* (Werning, *Spiritual Renewal for the 21st Century*, p. 24).

C. F. W. Walther once wrote that the sheep will judge their shepherds. So we must die to ourselves and live to God. The Shepherd must shepherd our sheep, not we. Then we will be watchmen and shepherds (Ez 33,34) approved of God. And, "For this reason let every one esteem his Baptism as a daily dress in which he is to walk constantly, that he may ever be found in the faith and its fruits, that He suppress the old man and grow up in the new," (Large Catechism, IV, 84). And, "'Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.' By this (Jesus) meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive," John 7:38,39.

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