Third Steps

Why is it that we don't see the baptism in the [Devoted] Spirit today as it was in the days of the Apostles?

We do if we obey the truth about being begotten from above (John 3 and Luke 11:13); if we walk in the fullness of Truth, the way the Apostles walked, in full obedience to Christ and the Father. Today, we talk about regeneration: but, talking about a doctrine is not at all the same thing as experiencing the essential living communication described by that doctrine. To be blunt: many who consider themselves to be Christians today, are simply not regenerated… not saved… not True Christians… have not been chrismated or confirmed in any true spiritual essence.

“Jesus replied to [Nicodemus], Amen, amen, I tell you, unless someone would be begotten from above, they are not able to see the kingdom of God.” — John 3:3

“Jesus replied, Amen, amen, I tell you, unless someone would be begotten out of water[1] and Spirit[2], they are not able enter into the kingdom of God.” — John 3:5

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[1] From the close context, this is a normal physical human birth, not water baptism.

[2] This is an abnormal miraculous heavenly spiritual birth; in which, through prayer, the Holy Spirit of God begins to dwell within us and communicate with us, teaching our human spirits about Jesus and the Father, mostly from the Old Testament. This is regeneration. This kind of evidence is not magic: it requires an active and sometimes painful prayer life… prayer is a toilsome process… not a walk in the park.

“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert; even so, it is necessary [that] the Son of Man [is] to be lifted up: that all believing in Him would have eternal life: for, thus God loved the world; so, He gave His only-begotten Son; that all believing in Him would not be destroyed; but, would have eternal life: for, God did not send the Son into the world that He would judge[3] the world; but, that the world would be saved through Him.” — John 3:14-17

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[3] He would not judge at the time of this sending; this cannot mean that the Son would not judge at a later date. Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10

“If therefore you, evil rulers, had known to give good gifts to your children: how much more, The Father out of Heaven will give [the] Devoted Spirit to them [if] they ask Him?” — Luke 11:13

The only condition in this verse is that we ask; anyone can ask; the evidence either presents Himself or He does not: if He does not present Himself, walk away.

Note that, this verse does not say, either that we must ask to receive the Spirit, or that asking is the only way to receive the Spirit. It does say that sincere asking is the “sure fired”, Bible-specified way to receive the Spirit.

Note also that, it is impossible to have a discussion of the work of the Spirit, without also including the Father and the Son. Even though These Three are One God, in no way different from One Another in power and glory: the Bible emphasizes the Father’s love, which is why He is called Father; the Bible emphasizes the Son’s authority, which He won in single combat by His obedience on the Cross; and the Bible emphasizes the Spirit’s power, because, as Vicar in Residence, during Christ’s temporal absence, He is the One Who brings us to Christ and His Father.

Here are links to all of John 3 and Luke 11:13, as well as a fresh translation of John 3:

<https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3B+Luke+11%3A13&version=KJV;SBLGNT;LEB>

<https://www.swrktec.org/new-testament>

<https://www.academia.edu/42705969/John_3>

So, the reasons for the suppression, “of baptism in the … Spirit today”, are either its false denial (common in some churches), or its false exaggeration (common in other churches). Either way, genuine spirituality seems to be disappearing from the earth during our age. That should terrify us. Even some so-called orthodox viewpoints of salvation seem to have abandoned the doctrine of the Spirit.

Take for example of denial of the Spirit, this very defective and deficient claim: “We are saved by grace alone; through faith alone; in Christ alone; as revealed in the scripture alone; to the glory of God alone!”

Why is it necessary to replace Scripture with a slogan, in a world view of sola scriptura, scripture alone?

Why is there no mention of the Father’s eternal work and presence, when Christ repeatedly claims, I and the Father are One: there is no Son without the Father, nor Father without the Son. As John, so emphatically points out in 1 John; anyone denying either the Father or the Son, has Neither: any person denying Father or Son is a root and branch atheist, according to John.

Why is the Spirit not included, since salvation is impossible without His powerful work? Why is faith unstated to be the creation of the Spirit: leaving many to suppose that they invented this faith which is theirs?

To be biblically accurate, this slogan would need to say:

We mere human creatures are saved by grace alone;
through God created faith alone;
in Father, Son, and Spirit – One God in three persons alone;
revealed by the Scripture – in obedience to the Father, as interpreted by the Son, and as taught by the Spirit – alone;
to the glory of God alone!

As a general fact, the Reformation largely suppressed the Spirit and His work, as a “kneejerk” overreaction to obvious exaggerations and excesses among its adversary.

Take for example of exaggerations and excesses of the Spirit, the prevalent claim of false miracles: “when the coin into the coffer clinks, the soul out of purgatory sprinks”; or, when the priest confects, certain physical objects are turned miraculously into other invisible spiritual objects.[4]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[4] We are not debating the factuality of change here. Believe whatever you wish about what Scripture plainly and repeatedly says. We are disputing the idea that any human priest has such power to work miracles based solely on his own proclamation.

“So then, they remained [there] enough time, speaking freely about the Lord, the Testifier, the Word of His grace, the Giver [of] signs and wonders to be created through their hands.” — Acts 14:3

In this verse, the preposition, ἐπὶ, upon or about, is followed by a string of dative singular phrases, each introduced by the dative singular article, τῷ, which is repeated three times. We believe that the latter two of these phrases, which are in the second attributive position to the first phrase, are best understood as additional titles, objective uses, rather than as verbal adjectives. The fourth phrase does not have the dative singular article, τῷ: still, we thought it well to continue the chain: for, διδόντι, is a dative singular participle as well. So, you decide, which is the best intent of the phrase – the Giver, or the One giving….

The main point that this verse is making is that God alone performs miracles: for, a miracle disrupts the normal providence of original creation, and changes that providence in a fresh and new creative act. Ordinary human beings do not perform miracles. If a miracle is performed through an agency of human hands, or through an agency of icons, or through any other agency whatsoever; we may be sure that the miracle is done by God alone, the human hands are nothing more, less, or else than a metaphor or trope of God’s Presence.

Eventually, some of these lying miracles, false relics, and the like, were exposed: the blood of Christ, some of the bones of martyrs, or wood from the true cross of Christ. Making money by selling false relics was a big business, especially tempting in a poverty-stricken parish. As the lies were exposed, the credibility of churches declined, all miracles, including true spirituality, and regeneration were discredited.

People turned more and more to right reason as the measure of truth. The baby was thrown out with the dirty bath water, to the great detriment and peril of the churches, not to mention the people: for a gospel cluttered with false exaggerations and excesses of true spirituality, and a gospel purged of all spirituality are no gospels at all. Infected churches and people are left without a Gospel, or with a greatly distorted Gospel: we have been left with a long and arduous journey groping to find our way Home.

So, this is another way to approach the topic that theologians call regeneration, which means to be begotten over again a second time, or to be begotten from above, or to be born again: a topic we cannot discuss without considering all the ramifications of John 3… since, John three is one of the essential and key chapters necessary to formulate the complete doctrine of regeneration. Even so, we see that regeneration describes a true miracle, in that the normal order or providence of human life is disrupted and the person being regenerated is changed forever.

This raises the question: how does regeneration take place? What are the root causes of regeneration? What provides the authority and power for regeneration? A very common answer is found in the phrase, baptismal regeneration; so, now we must define the adjective, baptismal: for, there are several views about what baptismal regeneration means and does. Here are some of the alternative solutions:

* Baptismal regeneration is baptism with ***water***, and only water is necessary when used in a specific rite of baptism. A rite depending only on the use of water.
* Baptismal regeneration is baptism in a particular ***mode***, a specific mode is necessary: usually, sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. A rite depending only on the mode of application of water or oil, and the like.
* Baptismal regeneration is about the ***formula*** of baptism, and that specific rite must be used: three repetition baptisms, trine worded baptisms, and the like.
* Baptismal regeneration is about the ***sponsor(s)*** sponsoring the baptism, or on the strength and/or object of their faith.
* Baptismal regeneration is about the ***officiant*** over the baptism, on the strength and/or object of the officiant’s faith, or on the official power of their ordination. The officiant may be viewed as having the power to “confect” the elements: the elements may be changed (transubstantiation, transmutation), or connected with other elements (consubstantiation, spiritual presence, or something else).
* Baptismal regeneration is about the ***candidate*** being baptized, specifically on their faith, which is often viewed as something that they created. Human free will and human power are often confounded; humans may have desire or will to be saved: but, humans have no power whatsoever to affect their own salvation. This view necessitates that only self-consciously believing individuals be baptized.
* Baptismal regeneration is about ***confection*** of the elements: the Spirit’s power to “confect” the elements.
* Baptismal regeneration is about a ***God***-performed invisible miracle; performed under the authority of Christ (Matthew 28:18 – authority, not power); through the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:2 and 2:4); and in the love of the Father (John 3:16). Thus, baptismal regeneration is a grace of the Triune God, by Whom, faith is created in the Human heart (Ephesians 2:8), and in which the Human heart is permanently changed.

In the verse, “For by grace you are saved through faith; and that not out of you (sourced in you, of yourselves): it is the gift of God….” In the phrase, “it is the gift of God”, the specific antecedent to, “it”, is faith.

However, some theologians deny this very clear grammatical fact, claiming that the specific antecedent to, “it”, is grace….

Note that, faith, is the closest possible antecedent to, “it”: not grace.

Yet, if we tolerate this false conclusion, that grace is the specific antecedent to, “it”, only for the sake of discussion, we see that faith is subsidiary to grace: so even if grace were the specific antecedent to, “it”, faith would still be contained within grace, still the gift of God.

Note also that both, χάριτί, and, πίστεως, are feminine; while, τοῦτο, and, δῶρον, are both neuter: so agreement of gender with the antecedent is no argument at all. Moreover, σεσῳσμένοι, is a masculine plural perfect passive participle functioning as the main verb after the auxiliary verb, “you are”.[5]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[5] <https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+2%3A8&version=KJV;SBLGNT;LEB>

In Greek, the masculine is often the first action of the Prime Mover, or the cardinal; the feminine discusses the form or shape being developed by the Prime Mover; while the neuter identifies the outcome or product: in this case, a saved person is a gift of God formed by His created grace through faith. Grace and faith are both creative instruments, not sourced in the person being saved: rather, faith is being created within the person being saved.[6]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[6] Consider the potter and the clay. God is the Prime Mover. The spinning, the turning, the axis, the pivot, the cardinal is masculine. The form or shape (grace and faith) are feminine. The clay and its final product (we/us) are neuter.

<https://classic.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=potter+clay&qs_version=KJV>

* Finally, baptismal regeneration is a blending, combination, mixture, or permutation of some, several, or all of those above; or baptismal regeneration is something entirely different from any of those above: resulting in a very large number of possible definitions for baptismal regeneration.

Which of these, if any, are correct?

“So then, they remained [there] enough time, speaking freely about the Lord, the Testifier, the Word of His grace, the Giver [of] signs and wonders to be created through their hands.” — Acts 14:3

This is our “acid” test of any miracle in general, and baptismal regeneration, a specific kind of miracle, in particular.

“Baptismal regeneration is about a ***God***-performed invisible miracle; performed under the authority of Christ (Matthew 28:18 – authority, not power); through the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:2 and 2:4); and in the love of the Father (John 3:16). Thus, baptismal regeneration is a grace of the Triune God, by Whom, faith is created in the Human heart (Ephesians 2:8), and in which the Human heart is permanently changed.”

Any definition of baptismal regeneration that intentionally omits any of the above elements is heretical and idolatrous: it makes an idol out of water, mode, formula, human sponsors, officiant, candidate, even confection, and more: for, in confection the elements are not the objects of change. To avoid heresy and idolatry, we must confess that the Only Subject of change is God; while the only object of change is the candidate.

Still, rank heresies and mythical superstitions about baptismal regeneration persist: for which cause, many are driven away from the Gospel, rather than being attracted to the Gospel.

Reason, together with our five senses, should tell us that mere water has no such magical powers: we don’t believe in magic anyway. Every one of us has experience with water; we have a very good idea of water’s powers and properties: performing miracles is not among them. Let me be perfectly clear. Baptism with water only removes a little dirt: it is merely ***sign*** of regeneration’s power to remove sin, sins condemnation, and all of sins evil effects. If the Spirit were necessarily present with the water, this would be a ***symbol***, rather than a sign: but, not a single verse of Scripture confirms that the Spirit is ever present, let alone necessarily present with the water. Ceremonially, it makes the person being baptized a member of an earthly local church; nothing more: this is the Baptism of John the Baptist. John himself insists that this is insufficient. All water baptisms require confirmation or chrismation by the baptism of Jesus with the Spirit: this baptism of Jesus completes and perfects every defect of water baptism.

Reason also convinces us that no ***priest*** has the power to work miracles either. If we are true Christians, begotten from above, by the Spirit, we are already priests ourselves; we know very well, all the limits and powers of the priesthood: we know that we have no ability to change the properties of water… we, in and of ourselves, do not work miracles.

It should be very clear from our discussion thus far, that regeneration is a true miracle; it is the direct intervention of ***God*** in the events and processes of Creation, which changes those ordinary affairs and processes: miracles are only performed by ***God… Father, Son, and Spirit***. God is the Sole Sovereign over all miracles: no miracle takes place without His direct intervention, Sovereign command, and action; even though, He may mediate such action through powerful creatures known as angels; even though He may employ human and/or other agencies to signify His presence.[7]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[7] The pillar of fire and smoke in the wilderness is a symbolizing agency confirming the miracles taking place. The hands in Acts 14:3 are examples of signifying agencies: if regeneration, a miracle takes place, the symbol of God’s presence is confirmed. Regeneration, however, is not a visible outward miracle; it is an ***invisible*** inward miracle, known only to the person being regenerated: so, there is no evidence that anything more than a sign has taken place. This is why the attendant symbolizing miracle of tongues is so essential in Acts: even though unnecessary to us. Note that the symbol of tongues is given without human agency in Acts 2, elsewhere in Acts at water baptism, in some places at the laying on of hands… not at water baptism, and in the Old Testament without human agency.

If we are not convinced thus far, we should consider the pool of Bethesda in John 5:1-9, where it is clear that the miracle is not in the water: but it is in the Spirit that is in the water. Thus, if the Spirit is pleased to be present in the waters of baptism, regeneration will take place. However, the Spirit is Sovereign; He alone decides if and when He will be present at any water baptism: for, without His power, regeneration cannot possibly take place.

https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+5%3A1-9&version=KJV

Consider also, John the Baptist. There is no evidence that he was ever baptized. Yet, before he was even born, before Jesus Himself was born, Luke 1:41 says that “the babe leaped in [Elisabeth’s] womb. Since John cannot speak for himself in utero, Elizabeth is given prophetic utterance to explain the whole event. Evidently, John, while still in utero, has the Spirit of God and recognizes the presence of Christ. So, the gift of the Spirit did not depend on baptism for either John or Elizabeth.

https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1:41&version=KJV

Yet, both Acts 18:24-25 and 19:1-6 show us that the baptism of John was defective: being only water baptism. How was it defective? Not in form: for John surely knew of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and baptized in that name. But, even John himself claims that his baptism is defective; which Jesus also confirms (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 2:38; 10:47; 11:16).

https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+18%3A24-25%3B+19%3A1-6&version=KJV

https://classic.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=baptize+Holy+&qs\_version=KJV

So how was the baptism of John defective? It lacked the sprinkling of the blood of Christ; it lacked the baptism of Jesus; it lacked the baptism with the Spirit of God and with fire (Hebrews 9:13, 19, 21; 11:28; 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2).

https://classic.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?qs\_version=KJV&quicksearch=sprink+blood&begin=47&end=73

I know a church that emphasizes these teachings through a second ceremony, auxiliary to and completing baptism. In this ceremonial twin set, baptism illustrates the washing away of sin, while the second ceremony illustrates the bestowing of the Spirit. Preaching and prayers for the Spirit are actively pursued as well: so, if the Spirit is not bestowed, it is not for lack of trying. Furthermore, every service is filled with prayers for the Spirit: so, if the Spirit is not bestowed, it can only be because of a lack of sincerity on the part of participants. This, the most Pentecostal of all churches, taught me to pray for the help of the Spirit with every word, verse, and chapter of Scripture: yet, I have never heard one voice speaking in tongues in this church; I have never witnessed a single miracle performed in this church, other than the miracle of regeneration.

As in several places in the New Testament, this second event, not the ceremony, but the Spirit of God’s bestowal of Himself as He creates faith in the heart: completes and perfects all water baptisms, makes the person a true Christian, ordains the person as a priest and prophet.

It is unprofitable to argue which comes first, faith in Christ or the indwelling of the Spirit: they come together. I personally, do not think that the unaided human mind has the ability to believe: the indwelling Spirit must create that first spark of faith. If you differ, that’s your decision.

If you chose to believe that water baptism and the Spirit ordinarily come together, that is your business as well. This is not about denying your right to your opinion, or coercing your conscience. This is about disabusing you of any idea that power resides in water or any human priesthood. The power to perform miracles and regenerate lost souls resides exclusively with God. This is about asserting that the Spirit’s baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation; and the Spirit’s baptism confirms, completes, and perfects all water baptisms. You, as always, are free to believe whatever you wish.

However, Jesus, alone, baptizes with the Spirit and with fire; this is the only baptism that saves; it is not a second blessing: no one goes to heaven without it.[8]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[8] Because of a later complaint about clarity, the following was added to show that this is Paul’s point, not mine.

“Ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι, εἴπερ πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν. εἰ δέ τις πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει, οὗτος οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ.” — Romans 8:9

“Now, you are not in flesh, but in Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” — Romans 8:9

Paul could not have spoken more clearly. No one can be saved or belong to Christ without being indwelt by the Spirit. It is the power of the Spirit that creates the first baby step of faith in the heart, and all the other steps that follow. It is the teaching of the Spirit, by Whom we learn the Son and the Father. The Spirit is the co-Shepherd that brings us to Christ, the Door. The Spirit and the Son together escort us into the presence of the Father. This is not about spiritual gifts: this is about the means of salvation itself. Salvation is a Trinitarian work of grace: no person of the Trinity may be left out of it.

***Complaint***

Quote:

Your last sentence is misleading/confusing. I think that the questioner was referring to 1 Corinthians 12 and 14[9] When we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, HE sends us the Holy Spirit. THAT would be considered baptism by the Holy Spirit, as HE then indwells us and guides us in life. Baptism per say, as you infer, doesn’t save us. IF it did, then the thief on the cross wasn’t really saved.

Unquote.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[9] What reason do we have to draw any such conclusion? That’s not what was asked.

***Reply***

First of all, we do not and cannot “accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.” He accepts us, we do not “accept” Him. At most, we beg for the Spirit of God to lead us to Him. Jesus is already “Lord and Savior”, nothing, we can say or do, changes these facts in any way. When we first come to Christ, we don’t even have enough sense to know or understand what “Lord and Savior” even mean: the Spirit has to patiently teach us all things: which He does by taking us by the hand like little children and gently leading us along the road, through many difficulties.

Secondly, I believe that this order (sequence) is incorrect.

For me, Luke 11:13 and John 3 show that we must have the help of the Spirit before we can recognize Jesus for Who He really is. Moses had to have his spiritual gift before he was able to talk with God. His 70 or 72 helpers could not understand Moses’ writings properly before they received spiritual gifts.

However, you are welcome to your opinion: just don’t try to force it on anyone else, or coerce anyone else’s conscience with it.

While we say that Jesus sends the Spirit; more precisely Jesus asked the Father to send the Spirit: the Spirit proceeds from the Father, according to Scripture, not from the Father and the Son, as many claim. There is not a single verse of Scripture claiming that the Spirit proceeds from the Son. So, I cannot, unfortunately, agree with your sequencing of things.[10]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[10] More additional clarification: The Spirit is integral to salvation there is no salvation without Him. There is no second blessing, bringing spiritual gifts. There is no second blessing, allowing people to be saved without being devoted (committed, dedicated, sanctified). If you are being saved, you are already being devoted, and you already have one or more spiritual gifts. However, salvation is not a onetime act; salvation is a lifelong process, with Scripture speaking about it as present, past, and future: salvation is not finished until angels carry us into the heavenly city.

***Additional Complaint***

Quote:

I completely agree with your last three lines, as what the Catholic church teaches is heresy, as they changed the Nicean Creed. - Everyplace in the Bible KJV where baptism is mentioned, IT says “BELIEVE and be baptized”, so Salvation must come first. - I see that your great training at Dallas Theological Seminary has fallen by the wayside when you went over to the Presbyterians. PLEASE re-read the New Testament King James Version![11]

Unquote.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[11] This response is belittling, hectoring, and insulting: it is a vicious ad-hominem, for which there is no excuse.

***Reply:***

You say, “When we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, HE sends us the Holy Spirit.” So, in your view, in order to receive the Spirit, we must confess or be able to confess Jesus as Lord: in other words, the offer is conditional.

“εἰ οὖν ὑμεῖς πονηροὶ ὑπάρχοντες οἴδατε δόματα ἀγαθὰ διδόναι τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν, πόσῳ μᾶλλον Ὁ Πατὴρ Ὁ ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ δώσει Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον τοῖς αἰτοῦσιν Αὐτόν.” — Luke 11:13

“If therefore you, evil rulers, had known to give good gifts to your children: how much more, The Father out of Heaven will give [the] Devoted Spirit to them [if] they ask Him.” — Luke 11:13

Which, in other words, seems to me to be unconditional. All that is necessary is to ask, and the gift will be received.

You say, “Everyplace in the Bible KJV where baptism is mentioned, IT says “BELIEVE and be baptized”, so Salvation must come first.” You do not say how salvation comes or can come. Nor do you deal with the NT use of the word, save, in present, past, and future tenses: we are not truly saved until the angels carry us into the presence of God.

You say, “Salvation must come first”, which is the hypothesis of believer’s baptism, which nobody held before 1500 AD. Any historic background was emphatically denied by my Church History professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary: nor is there any evidence for the additional hypothesis called Landmarkism. The biblical and archaeological evidence shows, without doubt, that babies were baptized from the earliest times by immersion: they were far too young to have any faith in Christ. Moreover, water baptism replaces circumcision, and we know that eight-day-old babies were circumcised without any possibility of personal faith: it was the faith of the parents that was on trial… just ask Moses. Nor is immersion a necessity: for, Hebrews describes several baptisms involving sprinkling (Hebrews 9:10, where “divers washings”, βαπτισμοῖς, is followed by Hebrews 9:13, 19, 21; 10:22; 11:28; 12:24, all of which have sprinkled or sprinkling): so, all the lexicons that insist that baptize must mean dip, dye, immerse, or wash are in error… none of them have considered this scriptural evidence form Hebrews. Indeed, the KJV appears to be covering up the evidence by translating, βαπτισμοῖς, as washings, rather than as baptisms. It is dangerous to insist on these uncertain human opinions, and use them to be at odds with the rest of Christianity: these are not issues over which we should have dissension and discussion. Believer’s baptism may very well be your belief: but, don’t force it on anybody else. You may hold to Landmarkism if you like: but, keep it to yourself… it is not historically accurate. You may prefer immersion: but, leave others to their own preferences.

Water baptism simply does not save in any way. All baptisms of mankind must be perfected by the baptism of Christ, the baptism of the Spirit, which is what it means to be begotten from above. Before Pentecost, 33 AD, only a few prophets were begotten from above.

The Bible teaches that the gift of the Spirit is the start of salvation. The Apostles understood nothing of what they had witnessed until they received power (Acts 1:8 and chapter 2). It is true that they had first experienced the Crucifixion physically: but, they were crushed by it and had no sense of its meaning. Even when Jesus opened the Scriptures and broke bread in Luke 24, they were still mystified by these events. Acts 2 is the great turning point in their lives, when the lights came on. Paul says that this reception of the Spirit is the essential element of salvation in Romans 8:9. We can argue futily all day long over which came first, the chicken or the egg. The fact is that the gift of the Spirit is the single most important element of baptism and salvation, integral to both, without which no one is truly baptized or saved: it is the ongoing work of the Spirit in the heart that creates, nurtures, and builds faith. Salvation and sanctification are not sourced in human power; they are sourced in Divine power. Thus, Jesus talks to the Woman at the Well about the Spirit, as well as His Messiahship. Thus, Jesus tells Nicodemus about the necessity of the Spirit’s New Begetting before He introduces the Gospel in John 3:16.

You are simply mistaken about the use of the word baptize in the NT. Here are lists of every KJV use:

<https://classic.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=baptize&qs_version=KJV>

<https://classic.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=baptism&qs_version=KJV>

<https://classic.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?qs_version=KJV&quicksearch=believe&begin=47&end=73>

The words believe and baptize are only used together in 5 KJV verses:

<https://classic.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=believe+baptize&qs_version=KJV>

None of these verses excludes the idea that the Spirit is the specific instrument creating faith, or that the baptism involved is the baptism with the Spirit. Mark 16:16 was not added to the NT until the fourth century; the word baptism in this context must mean Spirit baptism: water baptism cannot possibly save. The other four verses are all in Acts; these verses do not explicitly state that these baptisms are Spirit baptisms: however, given the great emphasis on the coming of the Spirit throughout Acts, it is difficult to believe that anything other than Spirit baptism could possibly be intended… the Apostles never left the job half done.

<https://classic.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=believe+baptism&qs_version=KJV>

Here are some other NT verses on the Spirit:

<https://www.academia.edu/37541087/The_Holy_Spirit_pdf>

<https://www.swrktec.org/spirit>

You mention KJV in at least two places. Surely, you are not an advocate of KJV only, are you? I strive to do most of my work directly from the Greek text in both OT and NT, precisely because KJV and all other translations are defective.

So, I really don’t understand what you find “misleading or confusing” about the statement, “Jesus, alone, baptizes with the Spirit and with fire; this is the only baptism that saves; it is not a second blessing: no one goes to heaven without it.” This statement says nothing that does not come directly from the NT (Romans 8:9).

Nor do I understand what this has to do with Presbyterianism. I’ve been led to believe that Calvin was an opponent of spiritual expression because of excesses in the Roman church. Luther also appears to minimalize any discussion of the Spirit, at least in his children’s catechism. So, a better, more balanced emphasis on spirituality appears to come into the English language through Anglicanism: but, I don’t know why that would be pertinent either.

We are left with nothing else but God Himself, Who has given us the Greek text of both OT and NT, to hand down within the Church. It says what it says. “You must be begotten from above (born again)”: that’s a seminal issue. Amen.

How do you communicate and commune with Him?

Be well.

[12]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[12] If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use.