

C. Keith Sigler ON THE SPIRIT

From: C. K. Sigler

To: Ray Downen and friends on his list

Subject: Ray's denial of the Holy Spirit's involvement in conversion.

Ray cites an e-mail: "Commenting on 'I baptize with water. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit,' a brother concludes, 'Those who are baptized with the Spirit are gathered into the granary, which could stand for the kingdom of God on earth or in heaven. The rest are not deemed suitable for the grain bin and are therefore destined for destruction in the everlasting fire.'"

Ray then says: "Do you see anything wrong with the logic? I do" To the contrary, I believe that Ray's correspondent offers a reasonable application of John's (the Baptizer) prophecy. John, like Jesus, often divided the world into two groups, those who follow the way of God and those who forsake his way. Many in John's crowd would later believe in and be joined with Christ in his kingdom. Others would reject him and be eternally lost.

In a follow-up paragraph, Ray correctly portrays God's pouring out the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost as a baptism of the Spirit. Almost all Restoration Movement adherents would agree with him, and would also add that the same "gift" was later given to a group of believing Gentiles at Caesarea as they were hearing Christ's gospel (Acts 10, 11).

All of us obviously agree with Ray that humans perform the baptism in water commanded in the great commission in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, connecting the three persons of the Godhead in that act of obedient faith.

What Ray attempts to do as he goes to his conclusion of his analysis is to deny any involvement of the Holy Spirit as an active divine participant in the conversion event. We get the first indication of this unbelief when he refers to those who are "born again of water and spirit" Most of you are acquainted with that phrase by Jesus describing the elements of the "new birth." And you probably think that the failure to capitalize the S was just a typo. No, Ray arbitrarily uses the lower case when quoting John 3:5 as a part of his denial of the Holy Spirit's participation in conversion.

Ray opens the final paragraph of his opinion piece with this sentence: "Therefore I must affirm that it is not taught in inspired

writings that Jesus performs Holy Spirit baptism to induct sinners into the ranks of the saved.” The phrase “Holy Spirit baptism” is not used anywhere in the Bible.

However Apostle Paul declares to those in the church in Corinth that they were formed as one body in Christ. In the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians it is made clear that the manifold gifts of ministry were given to believers through the one and same Holy Spirit. Immediate following (in verse 13 Paul affirms that they had been inducted by that same “one” Spirit into the one body of Christ. The Apostle’s exact language in English is: “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks—slave or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” NIV).

If Ray chooses to comment on this passage, he will likely attempt to persuade you that Paul intended, out of eleven uses of “Spirit,” that only one does not refer to the Spirit of God. He may say that the first time it is used in verse 12 that Paul intended the word “Spirit” to indicate some common human spirit. Ray’s demotion of the Spirit here is not supported by any major English translation. Ray, without formal translation credentials, will declare all of them in error. (He may even opine that all translators over the centuries have conspired to maintain an erroneous capitalization.) Whew!

At the end of his e-mail, Ray asked those who disagree with his belief about the absence of the Holy Spirit in conversion to “please let me know, and please explain exactly why you do so. And if so, how do you think Luke should have written Acts 2:38 to make it clear why he disagreed with the ‘great commission’ of Jesus and the many examples of baptisms of sinners in the apostolic age.”

I have attempted to respond to his first request. Perhaps another correspondent who understands what Ray expects in his last sentence will jump in. I do not believe that Acts 2:38 contradicts any of the Gospels’ accounts of the great commission. Therefore, even if I were daring like Ray Downen, I would not wish to advise Luke to alter his account in any way.

RAY: I’m sure that Jesus was not mistaken in calling for HUMANS to baptize converts. I’m confident that the apostles demonstrated by themselves baptizing converts that they understood Jesus to NOT saying the baptizing would be done by the Spirit. Anyone can read Acts 2:38 and see that the apostles were not saying the Spirit would baptize new believers, as Keith wants it to be. Paul would not disagree with Jesus and the other apostles!