

Letter 04
Two Baptisms
2011-07-27

Dear Dan,

I was baptized twice. Once in water when I was 12, and once in the Spirit when I was 14.

The water baptism took place in a very cold baptismal in what was then Snoqualmie Assembly of God.

The Church there was pastored by one of two brothers who were both pastors. The other brother was the pastor at Fall City Assembly, where my family attended. Fall City Assembly met in the local Odd Fellows hall at that time because they had not become large enough to purchase their own place. That is why any baptisms at Fall City Assembly took place on Sunday Services at Snoqualmie Assembly. Somewhere there is a photograph of me in a white shirt standing in the baptismal tank with the Pastor.

The second baptism took place at an Assembly of God campground located on the Spokane Indian Reservation, near a little dot on the map called Fruitland, Washington. This was during the summer of my 14th year, 1973.

I remember at one of the night meetings the featured Evangelist was preaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Lord was moving in a mighty way there, and all up and down the West Coast as He was in the midst of the Jesus People revival. So it was likewise there at Fruitland.

Later in the evening after the main part of the service had ended the alter was opened for prayer ministry. I did not go forward at that time, but I was being drawn by the Lord nonetheless.

At this point Dan, I should give you some back-story about what had to be overcome in my life just to get to that point. You see, I had been spiritually abused at one time concerning speaking in tongues. A year or two prior to 1973, I had accompanied a friend to a church he and his family attended in Sedro Woolley .

The church was pastored by a Lady Pastor, and that one Sunday there was a Lady Evangelist speaking on the Gift of Tongues. After the preaching part of the service, the evangelist walked into the pews to pray for individuals, when she got to me she asked me if I spoke in tongues. I said "no", and began to receive a series of verbal reprimands and downright ridicule for not speaking in tongues.

Essentially I was made fun of in front of the congregation about this. For some reason, that's as far as it went. I don't remember any further exchange.

But after that I would carefully observe what people would do in the Pentecostal Churches I attended with my Mom. Most of the time what I observed was a spiritual “pissing contest” between people to see whose gifts were better.

Essentially the gifts were being put on display and then “bought and sold” with social/emotional/psychological currency, making a form of commerce in the church out of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So it was that I had a certain skepticism in 1973 about the Evangelist and his gifts. **Yet, the Real Holy Spirit was also moving, circumventing the flaws in the Evangelist's doctrine.**

At the end of one of the evening services I was with a few other teenagers just outside the back of the auditorium (yes, it had a real sawdust floor).

The evangelist came up to us and started talking to us. I asked him what the Baptism of the Holy Spirit meant, and he began to explain that it meant to speak in tongues. For some reason, I knew two things right then, the first was that his notion that being baptized with the Spirit was equivalent with speaking in tongues was wrong, the second was that whatever or whoever the Holy Spirit was, was something I wanted. I knew the gifts were available because ever since becoming a Christian I had read the Bible thoroughly.

As I began to pray, the evangelist instructed me to loosen my jaw and waggle my tongue. I knew in my heart that this was baloney, and that a real reaction to God The Almighty Holy Spirit would not be something one would have to conjure up or make happen. Then Something (or Someone) happened to me. I began to cry, then my body started to tingle all over as if charged with electricity. An electrical sensation not painful or uncomfortable, but powerful. My lips stammered for a brief moment, then I began to speak in a language not my own.

I began to walk around the campground for a period of time with my hands raised, all the while speaking in a different language. I don't know what was being said, but Someone was having a very rational, angelic conversation. I continued like this, and found myself walking back into the meeting hall and onto the platform at the front, where some young children were playing.

A boy, probably about 10 years old, began to laugh and make fun of me as I prayed. I felt a sense of anger, not malicious anger, but a righteous anger. I looked at him, then placed my right hand on his head and began praying for him in tongues. IMMEDIATELY both of his hands went into the air and he also began speaking in tongues.

Then I knew that what I had been experiencing was REAL.

Blessings...

Romanus Theophilus