



# An Exegetical Look at the Doctrine of Baptism

*A Brief Examination  
of the  
Biblical Doctrine of Baptism*



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## A Brief Note to the Reader

What follows is an excerpt from a series of lessons concerning the doctrine of baptism that were begun in 1999 for the Reformed Christian Fellowship in Waynesburg Ohio and were not completed (the study was disbanded that year). The lessons lay incomplete until I revisited and finished the series in 2007 and 2008, preaching the lessons to our small home church.

The lessons are a brief exegetical look at the doctrine of baptism and its manifestation as seen in the pages of the New Testament.

The doctrine presented in these pages is presented for a Protestant, Orthodox Baptist perspective. With this many of my Reformed Paedobaptist brethren will disagree. It is my desire that these lessons encourage further study of the word of God. One may not initially agree with all that is found upon these pages. Others may think the doctrines presented here as wholly new and strange, an invention of man. But it is my desire that upon careful study that the reader may see the validity of the truths presented. It is my conviction that these are the doctrines of Paul, of Peter, Of John, even of our Lord Christ Himself.

May the goodness and mercy of the Holy God, if it is pleasing in His sight, be upon those that read these words.

To His glory,  
Lee Carl Finley

December 23, 2008

(International usage of English has been utilised in this work, rather than that of American English.)

## Acknowledgments and Intellectual Ownership

I thank my loving and patient wife, Jennifer, who was of infinite support throughout the course of this endeavour. I thank my Sovereign and Gracious God, who has given me grace from eternity past, the desire to know and study His word, and mercy to accomplish this small work. My Lord, I am deeply grateful to you.

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*--What any man undertakes to prove as necessary, he shall make good out of the scriptures--*  
*--the primary rule of the Westminster Divines*

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## Introductory Lesson

### Introduction

We are Baptists. As many of you are aware, there are those of the Reformed community that do not share our particular view as regards the biblical mode of baptism, of the proper subjects of baptism, as well as the biblical meaning of the practice.

Further, many here can attest that this is a very serious issue for some. Some seem to see this doctrine as *the* doctrine that defines orthodoxy, even Reformed orthodoxy. Thus, anyone who holds to any manner of doctrine that attempts to withhold, safeguard or practice this ordinance in a manner other than that held by many of the great Reformers or confessions, is immediately seen as one who is either unenlightened, or worse yet, as a threat to the Reformed tradition and one to be avoided.

Others, when asked, actually make baptism *the* distinguishing mark of a Reformed Church. "Are we Reformed? Well, of course we are, we baptise our children, don't we?" Thus, in their eyes, to fail to baptise is to fail to be truly Reformed. Baptism, as they define it, equals orthodoxy. However, in making such a claim, they fail to recognise the fact that Rome has baptised infants for over 1000 years *prior to* the Reformation. Infant baptism, therefore, is not inherently a "Reformed" doctrine and is *not* a hallmark of being Reformed.

This evening we are going to re-visit (and hopefully finish) a series that we began in 1999, entitled "An Exegetical Look at the Doctrine of Baptism". As the title states, it will be the design of this study to examine the biblical data as regards this doctrine, rather than making a theological survey of all that has been said by various authors as regards this doctrine. Although we may examine a statement from a particular author from time to time, it is only to better understand either the truth of God's word, or to illustrate an errant view of this doctrine.

### "Why Study Baptism?"

For many of those today that profess belief in baptism by immersion, or that hold to the quaint axiom "believer's baptism", such a study is not needed. Often there is, especially in Baptist circles, an anti-intellectual bent as regards doctrine. "The Bible says so. That's good enough for me. We don't need to study baptism. We *know* what it is." And in so stating, they dismiss out of hand any serious study of doctrine, especially this doctrine. For many, such a study would be a waste of time.

But we are not of this opinion. Thus, I think it would be in order to set forth the biblical rationale for undertaking such a study:

*First, the doctrine of baptism is a doctrine of the Bible.* From even a cursory reading of the Gospels and the book of Acts, one can see that baptism does play a role in the ministries of John the Baptist, Jesus our Lord, and the apostles. Note for instance Matt. 3 (re baptism and John the Baptist); John 3.22-26, 4.1ff (re baptism and Jesus); Matt 28.19, Acts 2.40-

41, 8.26ff, 10.44-48 (re baptism and the apostles/early church). It is clear from these passages that baptism figures prominently in the ministries of John and Jesus and the early church. Thus, the doctrine is worthy of our study.

*Second, baptism appears to the initiatory rite into the church of God.* Whether Baptist or Presbyterian, both view baptism as the initiatory rite a person must undergo to be identified as a member of the covenant community. And this is the scriptural practice. Note again two of the above passages: Acts 8.26ff, 10.44-48. The first thing these individuals did upon confessing Jesus Christ as Lord was to be baptised.

*Third, baptism is a public testimony of the work of God in the life of an individual.* Again, although Baptists and Presbyterians may disagree as to the timing of this work of God, both would agree that baptism, in some way, does represent and is a public testimony of the work of God. This is why baptism is practiced publicly. It is a public sacrament or ordinance of the church. Historically, the act of baptism was much more of a public event than today. Typically, baptisms were carried out in a larger stream or a river, or possibly a large lake or sea (eg--the Sea of Galilee). Please remember, that this body of water was one of the social gathering places of the day. The waterside was a gathering place in the time of Jesus and the early church. For many, this river or sea held drinking water, water for cleaning, water for food, and possibly their food came from the sea. Baptism in this day was no private matter. Baptism was practiced before all, in broad daylight. Baptism was truly a public testimony of the work of God in a person. When a man went down into the water and another followed, and a crowd was watching, it could not be a private matter.

*Fourth, baptism is one of the two ordinances of the church.* The church only has two ordinances, both being established by our Lord: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Lord's supper was established just prior to the death of our Lord, in the upper room. Baptism was established as a practice of the early church in the words of our Lord just prior to His ascension, in Matt. 28. In that the church only has then two ordinances, with baptism being one of them, baptism is worthy to be studied.

*Fifth, the present confusion regarding baptism within the professing church.* With just a little looking, one can find that nearly every denomination practices some form of baptism. Thus, one would think that there would be some relative uniformity regarding baptism.

But actually the contrary is true. Each denomination or movement has its own idea as regards baptism. Immersion. Sprinkling. Pouring. Immersion, sprinkling, *and* pouring in the same church. Adults only. Infants only. Primarily infants, a few adults. Primarily adults, a few children (possibly infants). Immerse once. Immerse three times. And the list could go on.

There is also confusion as regards the meaning of baptism. "Why baptism? It is the sign of the covenant." "Baptism now takes the place of circumcision." "Unless one is baptised, he cannot be saved." "Baptism is nothing more than a sign." "Baptism is outward manifestation of the inward working of God upon the person, and represents union with Jesus Christ". "Baptism? It is irrelevant. It was an ancient Jewish practice that has no practical relevance for the child of God today."

This confusion is also manifested in the substitutions that the church has developed to take its place. And these we will hopefully examine in the course of time.

Suffice it to say that the present day confusion as regards baptism is good reason for such a study.

## Where to begin?

Having said all this, where then do we begin? For many who have written upon this subject, their starting point is the Old Testament. Specifically, with the person of Abraham. They state that baptism is the continuation of the Abrahamic Covenant. Thus, in their minds, the *logical* place to begin this discussion of baptism is the Old Testament. But logic, to be truly logical, must be based in biblical fact.

Exegetically, any serious study of the doctrine of baptism that is endeavouring to understand the biblical data *must* start in the New Testament. It is in the New Testament where this doctrine is introduced. Baptism is *not* in the Old Testament. It is not practiced in the Old Testament. It is not inferred in the Old Testament. It is not hinted at in the Old Testament.

Baptism *is found* in the New Testament. After almost 400 years of biblical silence at the close of the Old Testament, baptism is found at the beginning of both the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus Himself. Thus, to state that the Old Testament is the proper place to begin such a study is to ignore the biblical record and the history of revelation as regards this doctrine. Further, to begin such a discussion in the Old Testament without first examining the New Testament witness could border upon eisegesis as regards the Old Testament text, with one constantly reading Old Testament meaning into New Testament passages.

Thus, this study will be primarily a New Testament study, for this is where one finds the biblical data for such a study.

## Definition

Before we close our introductory comments regarding this study, I would like to discuss one more item: a definition of baptism. It may seem improper in an exegetical study to give a definition first. To some this may seem as my attempt to "re-define" (or, better yet, mis-define) the term. Thus, under this scenario, the rest of the study becomes nothing more than my attempt to make the biblical data "fit" my definition or beliefs. I assure you, I am doing nothing of the kind.

I do think it profitable, however, to briefly discuss a definition of what baptism is, so that there will be no confusion as to what I mean when I speak of baptism throughout the course of this study. And I hope that the definition that follows can serve as a brief summary of the biblical teaching concerning the subject, rather than being seen as a mould into which I am trying to make the study fit.

Baptism, then, can be simply defined as follows:

*Baptism (one of the two ordinances of the church) is that initiatory ordinance which a person professing faith in Christ undergoes. Those who profess faith in Christ, as manifested in repentance and confession of sins, and these alone, are the only proper subjects of Baptism. This baptising is not administered by sprinkling, pouring, or any other such means, but by dipping or immersing of the persons in the water,*

*in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, representing the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and the child of God's being united in the likeness of this death, burial and resurrection.*

This, then, is what I mean when I speak of baptism.

## **Conclusion**

In the following weeks, we will examine the following aspects regarding the doctrine of baptism:

--*the history of baptism.* We will examine the biblical manifestation of this doctrine, examining the baptism of John, the baptism of Jesus (as done by his disciples), and the baptism of the apostles, as practiced in the early church.

--*the meaning of baptism.* As the first part of the study will concern itself with the biblical instances of baptism, the second part of the study will concern itself with the meaning attached to the practice. Questions like "What is the significance of baptism?" and "Do we even need to baptise today?" will hopefully be addressed.

--*the practice of baptism.* The third part of this study concerns the various issues related to the practice of baptism. In this section, we will examine, God-willing, issues such as the biblical mode of baptism, the means of baptism, and the proper subjects of baptism.

This, then is how I hope to proceed if the Lord wills.

## **Observations**

### 1. The main issue in baptism is who are the people of God

Often when discussing differences in baptism, mode is the topic of primary importance. The discussion quickly changes from a biblical one to a lexical one, i.e. arguing about meanings of words. Please do not misunderstand me. I firmly believe that immersion is the only proper mode of baptism. But the mode of baptism is of secondary importance as an issue that separates Baptists from all others.

Likewise, others will debate the meaning of baptism. "It is the sign of the covenant." "Baptism has nothing to do with the covenant." Again, the meaning of baptism does have importance in the issues that separate Baptists and all others. But, again, the meaning of baptism is of secondary importance.

The real issue that separates Baptists and all others is one of ecclesiology: who comprises the church, the people of God. For it is the answer to *this* question that dictates who is to be baptised, and the significance of the baptism. For the Catholic, the church is whoever they can baptise into it. Hence, we have the baptising of a myriad of infants immediately upon birth in Catholic hospitals. And even if one was raised subsequently out of the Catholic Church, this "church" would accept that previous baptism as valid, if that same individual later expressed interest in the Catholic church.

For the Presbyterian, the church is made up of believers *and* their children. Thus, baptism *must be* for them as well. And in so doing, they subtly change the meaning of baptism from an identification of a professing believer with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ

into the New Testament equivalent of circumcision, the sign of the covenant. Again, it is the issue of who comprises the church of God.

Thus I observe: the main issue in baptism is who are the people of God.

### 2. To not teach what the Bible teaches is to teach a lie

There is, today, the widely-prevalent notion that there are some doctrines that are irrelevant as regards fellowship today. One of the classic examples is baptism. And there is one sense in which this is true. I would much rather fellowship with a paedobaptist who firmly held to the doctrines of grace, than to fellowship with some Baptist who cared nothing for these doctrines.

But such an attitude is deceiving. It seems to spawn, for the sake of peace, the idea that it matters not *what* we believe about baptism, we are brothers. While we may truly be brothers with the Calvinistic paedobaptist, it does matter a great deal what we think and teach as regards baptism. We must never forget, that the one who is not teaching that which the Bible teaches is an unfaithful witness to the word of God, even God Himself. When one teaches that the Bible instructs parents to baptise their infants, they are not only giving errant instruction, but they have become liars before God and man. They are teaching something that the Bible clearly teaches as untrue. To teach something other than what the Bible teaches is no matter of a difference of opinion. It is harmful. It is heresy. It is deceitful.

My paedobaptist friend may wish to turn the tables on me and say, "Everything you have just stated as regards me I could say of you. It is you who are lying to your people. It is you who are being unfaithful in teaching the word of God." Although I clearly disagree with his conclusion, the fact remains that one of us is a liar, not just one who has a difference of opinion. Thus I observe in the second place: to not teach what the Bible teaches is to teach a lie

### 3. These differences, although real and serious, are no reason to totally cut off fellowship

Having made the statement in the second observation that I did, some may think it almost impossible for a Baptist and a paedobaptist to have fellowship. But even though we do have real and substantial differences between us, they are still our brothers and sisters in Christ if they hold to the two essential doctrines of Christianity: the biblical teaching concerning the person and the work of Christ, and the biblical teaching concerning salvation through faith alone.

John, in his epistles, made it very clear that the person who differed with him as regards the person and/or the work of Christ was anti-christ, not just someone whom he disagreed. Likewise, anyone who added anything to the grace of God was, in Paul's eyes, anathema, that is, damned. Aside from this, we are brothers. We may have need of spiritual maturity and instruction, but we are brothers. Thus, I observe: even though there are differences between Baptists and others, although real and serious, are no reason to totally cut off fellowship. Granted, we may never have the unity we would like, but this is no reason not to love these also. They, too, are our brothers.

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However, having said this, we also need to note that in this country, you can be almost anything and be a Baptist. Former Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter call themselves Baptists. Billy Graham is considered a Baptist. Jerry Falwell is a Baptist. Yet, we could not have fellowship with any of them as



brothers in Christ. "Why?" one may ask. Simply put, their doctrine and their actions reveal that they have denied the biblical gospel. Further, Paul states in Galatians 1 that anyone that preaches a different gospel is not a believer. So, there is no common basis for us to have fellowship with these Baptists. One can be orthodox in his profession of the doctrine of baptism and not be a believer at all.

Further, one can deny the doctrines that we will discuss this evening and still be a believer. The Protestant Reformed Church of America is one such church that denies the doctrine of baptism as we profess it, but yet is faithful and true in its declaration of the gospel. In fact, they are probably the most consistent voice in America as regards the faithful declaration of the gospel in all its fullness. Yet they deny that which we hold dear--the biblical doctrine of baptism, as we shall see in the coming weeks.

What we can learn from this is that the doctrine of baptism, in all its importance, is a doctrine of secondary importance. That is, it is a doctrine that is not a cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. Good people on both sides of the issue can hold diverging views on this issue and still have godly fellowship in Christ. I say this to in no way diminish the importance the doctrine of baptism. However, this doctrine cannot become something that separates godly brethren from fellowshiping or working together in the cause of Christ. To do so would be acting in a manner inconsistent with the doctrine of the love of the brethren.

## The Baptism of John

Last week we began a series entitled, *An Exegetical Look at the Doctrine of Baptism*. In this series it is our intent to examine exegetically the relevant passages regarding the doctrine of baptism

### I. Review of last Lesson

In our study last week we examined various introductory issues related to baptism. The first was to answer the question: why study baptism?"

*--the doctrine of baptism is a doctrine of the Bible. From even a cursory reading of the Gospels and the book of Acts, one can see that baptism does play a role in the ministries of John the Baptist, Jesus our Lord, and the apostles. cf Matt. 3; John 3.22-26, 4.1ff; Matt 28.19, Acts 2.40-41, 8.26ff, 10.44-48 (re baptism and the apostles/early church).*

*--baptism appears to the initiatory rite into the church of God. cf Acts 8.26ff, 10.44-48.*

*--baptism is a public testimony of the work of God in the life of an individual.*

*--baptism is one of the two ordinances of the church.*

*--the present confusion regarding baptism within the professing church. Confusion regarding mode. Confusion regarding meaning. Confusion regarding subjects.*

We, then, attempted to answer the question: *Where to begin?* Exegetically, any serious study of the doctrine of baptism that is endeavouring to understand the biblical data *must* start in the New Testament. It is in the New Testament where this doctrine is introduced. Baptism is *not* in the Old Testament.

Lastly we examined a brief definition of the concept of baptism:

*Baptism (one of the two ordinances of the church) is that initiatory ordinance which a person professing faith in Christ undergoes. Those who profess faith in Christ, as manifested in repentance and confession of sins, and these alone, are the only proper subjects of Baptism. This baptising is not administered by sprinkling, pouring, or any other such means, but by dipping or immersing of the persons in the water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, representing the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and the child of God's being united in the likeness of this death, burial and resurrection.*

This, then, is what we examined in our introduction last week.

As we stated in our last lesson, we would be examining baptism as follows:

*--the history of baptism.*

*--the meaning of baptism.*

*--the practice of baptism.*

Thus, this evening, we begin with the history of baptism.

## II. The Baptism of John

In examining the topic of baptism, one needs to examine the life and ministry of John the Baptist, for it is with him that the subject of baptism is introduced to the people of God. To that end, we will be examining several of the relevant passages regarding the baptism of John. Our main text this evening will be Matt. 3, although other passages will be consulted.

- 1 ¶ In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
  - 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
  - 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
  - 4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.
  - 5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,
  - 6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.
  - 7 ¶ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
  - 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:
  - 9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.
  - 10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
  - 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:
  - 12 Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.
  - 13 ¶ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.
  - 14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?
  - 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.
  - 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:
  - 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
- Mt. 3.1-17

In examining the baptism of John we can discern the following characteristics of the baptism of John:

--the *first* characteristic of the baptism of John is that *the rite of baptism was that which characterised the ministry of John*. This can be seen in the terms used to describe John. Note in v. 1 John is referred to as John the *Baptist* or *Baptiser*. John was known for his practice of baptising. It was baptism that set him apart and distinguished him from other prophets. To refer to "the Baptist" was to refer to John. Note also the other relevant passages: Mt. 11.12; Mk. 1.4, 11.27-33; Luke 3.1-3; Jn. 1.19-28, 3.23. Baptism was *the* characteristic that distinguished John from other prophets.

And this being true, this infers another truth: baptism was not practiced within the

community of God's people prior to this time. For if it had, then his baptising would not have been a distinguishing characteristic, by which John was different from all others. What would be the significance of the title "Baptist" if others were or had been doing it?

The reason that this truth is important, is, that it has been suggested by some, that the baptism of John was nothing more than John merely practicing some form of a previously-existing washing ritual that he modified for his own purposes. Usually this is done in order to show that baptism is not immersion, but just a "washing" of some type. This is clearly not the case. If others were baptising or had been baptising in the past then the term "Baptist" loses its significance as a distinguishing title. But as it stands, it was the fact that John came baptising that distinguished him all others.

It is also clear from the Old Testament text that others did not baptise. Abraham was not involved in baptising. Neither was Moses, nor David, nor the prophets. This may beg the question, then, why *did* John come baptising?

The answer to this question can be found in Jn. 1. In v. 19-28, John is being questioned by the Pharisees as to who he is. In this section, we see that, again, baptism was integral to this line of questioning. Note v. 25: "Why are you baptising?" In v. 26, John only hints at the answer to this question. In vv. 29-34, he answers this question more fully.

In v. 29-34 John here is making a public declaration to those who were with him, as to who Jesus was: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" After this, he declares the circumstances as to how and when He came to know that Jesus, his cousin, was the Lamb of God. It was by baptism. Note John's words in v. 31. John came baptising in order that He, that is, the Messiah, the Lamb of God, should be revealed to Israel. Thus we find John's own answer to the question as to why he came baptising.

In v. 33 we find another reason: divine revelation. John was expressly told by God to baptise. And although not expressly stated in this passage, elsewhere we find that this baptism, which John was commanded by the Father to practice, was a baptism of repentance. Baptism was a public testimony of this repentance. Note Luke 3.1-18, esp. vv. 10-14. Thus, we find a two-fold answer to the question, why did John come baptising?

From these considerations, then, we can see that it was the rite of baptism was that which characterised the ministry of John.

--The *second* characteristic of the baptism of John is that *there is a relationship between baptism and larger bodies of water*. Whenever the location of John's ministry is given, as it relates to his baptising, it is always near some larger body of water. Note the following passages: Mt. 3.5-6, 13-16; Mk. 1.5; Lk. 3.3; Jn. 1.25-28, 3.23. There is not a recorded instance of John ever baptising anyone away from enough water in which they could be immersed. Although this, in and of itself, cannot prove that baptism is by immersion, it does seem to point in that direction.

--the *third* characteristic of the baptism of John is that *there is a relationship between baptism and preaching*. This is very evident in the biblical text. Note Mt. 3.1: "In those days John the Baptist came preaching..." In a very real sense, this was more a characteristic of John than baptism. Throughout the gospels we have ample

evidence that the main business of John was that of preaching. We have many snippets of his preaching within the gospels. Note Mt. 3 and Jn 1 for example.

The relationship between baptism and preaching is even more strongly stated in Luke 3.3, where baptism seems to be one of the elements of his preaching.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;...

--the *fourth* characteristic of the baptism of John is *the relationship between baptism and repentance*. This follows from the last point. Repentance was one of the main messages (if not *the* message) of the preaching of John. From the verses we just examined it seems that *it was the repentant that were baptised at the hand of John*. And he fully expected them to live lives of repentance. Note again vv. 8-14 of Luke 3.

--the *fifth* characteristic of the baptism of John the Baptist is *the relationship between baptism and confession of sins*. In the biblical witness, those who were baptised are noted as those who were confessing their sins. Note Mt. 3.5-6:

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,  
6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

The same sentiment can be found in Mk. 1.5. It would seem from the biblical record, that this confessing of sins was the way that John recognised whether one was truly repentant for their sins or not. This may explain John's harsh-sounding words in Mt. 3.7 and Lk. 3.7, where he chastises those coming for baptism. In any case, it appears that those who were baptised were confessing their sins.

Please note in the warning of John for those coming to be baptised: covenant relationship with the God of Israel counted for *nothing*. Note John's words in Mt. 3.7-9:

7 ¶ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?  
8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:  
9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Being a covenant child of Abraham had no bearing on whether one was to be baptised or not. What mattered was repentance and confession of sin, *not* that one was part of the covenant community.

--the *sixth* characteristic of the baptism of John the Baptist is *the relationship between baptism and the gospel*. This point may not be as readily evident as the previous ones. Please turn to Lk. 3.16-18. In the KJV this verse reads:

16 John answered, saying unto *them* all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:  
17 Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.  
18 And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

In v. 18, it states that John “preached” unto the people. However, in the Greek, this is not the typical word that is translated as “preach” in the New Testament. The word we have here is *euangelizomai*. Although this word can be translated as glad tidings (cf. Lk. 1.19), the common New Testament meaning for this word is “to preach the gospel”. Note its usage in the following passages: Lk. 4.18, 7.22, 8.1, 9.6, 16.16, 20.1. Thus, in this preaching of John he was preaching to them truths about the Christ. Note Mt. 3.11-12; Jn. 1.19-34, 3.25-36. The ministry of John was a *gospel* ministry. Thus, we see that his baptism was a gospel baptism, that is, a New Testament baptism.

These, then, are the characteristics of the baptism of John the Baptist.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. Baptism cannot be the sign of the covenant

If baptism is a sign of the covenant, as is stated by many within the Reformed movement today, then why would those who already had the sign of the covenant be baptised? To state thus is to do one of two things to the meaning of the baptism of John: Either the baptism of John becomes something qualitatively different from the baptism of Jesus and then the church, or the baptism of John becomes irrelevant.

Further, if baptism was the sign of the covenant, then all Jews should have participated because they were children of Abraham. Yet it is for exactly this reason that John rebukes the Pharisees who were coming for baptism. Note Mt. 3.7-9.

#### 2. If there is no repentance, there is no baptism

It is clear from the text that it was only the repentant that were baptised. To do otherwise is to not follow the example of John in baptism, or to state that the baptism of John was something qualitatively different than the baptism of Jesus and/or the apostles which is something the New Testament does not do.

#### 3. If there is no confession of sin, there is no baptism

This observation is similar to the last. From the text of the scriptures, it was only those who were confessing their sins that were being baptised. There is no record of John baptising those who were not confessing their sins (or who were too young to confess their sins). There is no record of “household baptisms” in the ministry of John. And again, to practice anything other than the practice of John is to not follow the example of John in baptism, or to state that the baptism of John was something qualitatively different than the baptism of Jesus and/or the apostles, which is something the New Testament does not do.

#### 4. The practice of making one wait several weeks or months prior to baptism is not biblical

This is clear from the text. And we need to note exactly the situation carefully. Those who came to John were baptised. And those who were coming were in the thousands. There is no way that John could have truly known the spiritual state of even a tenth of those who came for baptism. Note also the warnings regarding “bearing fruits worthy of repentance”. Those baptised were expected to live as repentant individuals. Note Lk. 3.8ff.

## The Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist

Two weeks ago we began a series entitled, *An Exegetical Look at the Doctrine of Baptism*. As we have stated, it is our intent to examine exegetically the relevant passages regarding the doctrine of baptism

### I. Review of last Lesson

As we stated in our introduction, we would be examining baptism in the following manner:

- the history of baptism.
- the meaning of baptism.
- the practice of baptism.

And we began last week examining the history of baptism, beginning with the baptism of John the Baptist, examining the characteristics of the baptism of John:

- the rite of baptism was that which characterised the ministry of John. It was by baptism that John was recognised. He came baptising by divine command, in order to reveal the Son.
- there is a relationship between baptism and larger bodies of water. cf. Mt. 3.5-6, 13-16; Mk. 1.5; Lk. 3.3; Jn. 1.25-28, 3.23.
- there is a relationship between baptism and preaching. Note Mt. 3.1, Luke 3.3
- the relationship between baptism and repentance.
- the relationship between baptism and confession of sins. Note Mt. 3.5-6:
- the relationship between baptism and the gospel. cf. Lk. 3.18 and the use of *euangelizomai* (cf. Lk. 4.18, 7.22, 8.1, 9.6, 16.16, 20.1 for the use of this word).

### II. The Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist

I would like to begin this evening by reading several passages that concern the baptism of Jesus by John:

- 13 ¶ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.  
 14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?  
 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.  
 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:  
 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.  
--Mt. 3.13-17
- 9 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.  
 10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:  
 11 And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased.

--Mk. 1.9-11

- 21 ¶ Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,  
22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.  
23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *the son* of Heli,

--Lk. 3.21-23a

- 29 ¶ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.  
30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.  
31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.  
32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.  
33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.  
34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

--Jn. 1.29-34

In these above passages we find Jesus coming to be baptised by John the Baptist. Before we examine the reasons for this event, I would like to take a few moments and briefly examine the setting of these events.

In the biblical narratives we find what frequently has been called the first public appearance of Jesus. And we find that this appearance is a rather private affair. In the first place we can note that in His coming Jesus was not alone. Note the words of Luke at this point in Lk. 3.21:

*Now when all the people were baptised, it came to pass, that Jesus (was) also baptised,...*

Jesus was not alone at this time. Most likely, John had a multitude before him. And thus we find Jesus coming in the midst of a crowd to be baptised.

In the second place we can speculate as regards what Jesus found when he arrived at the Jordan. In that John was usually preaching at the times when he was baptising (as we saw last week), more than likely Jesus also heard John preach, prior to His baptism. Although we know not the entire contents of the messages of John, it is not unreasonable to think, from what we do know, that John may have even spoken of the Messiah at this time. This was, after all, a common theme of his preaching.

In the third place we can note the circumstances of the baptism itself. The most complete account of this event is found in Mt. 3. In this passage we have two other items not found in the other passages: the account of John's hesitation to baptise Jesus, and Jesus' assurance to John regarding the baptism.

Note in Mt. 3.14 that, upon seeing Jesus, John tried to hinder Jesus from this baptism. Some have seen in these words a supposed contradiction with John's own testimony in Jn. 1.31, where John states that he did not know who the Christ was, and this is why he came



baptising. What are we to make of these words?

The answer can be found in the narratives of the birth of both Jesus and John. The births of both John and Jesus were miraculous. Both also had angelic heralds. And both happened to members of one family. We can see from Lk 1.36 that Mary was told of her relative Elizabeth's conception. Upon her arrival, Elizabeth noted that the baby actually jumped because he was in the presence of Mary. And Elizabeth herself recognised that the Child of Mary was her Lord.

In Lk. 1.56 we also find that Mary actually stayed for approximately three months with Elizabeth. Most likely many of the details of each of these miraculous births were exchanged between women. And it is not unreasonable to assume, that Elizabeth would later instruct her son as regards these events. In fact, it would almost be unexplainable to assume otherwise. Clearly John knew about the miraculous circumstances of his relative's birth. And he most likely was instructed as to both his mother's and father's testimony as regards himself and his relative Jesus.

Thus, I do not think it unreasonable to think that John suspected that Jesus was the Messiah. However, it was not until the baptism that he knew that the Lamb of God was actually his relative Jesus. And for this reason he was sent to baptise.

What follows are our Lord's words to John regarding this baptism. And at these words we find that John did proceed to baptise Jesus.

Lastly we can note the divine response of the event. Upon coming up from the water, we find Jesus was praying. At that time, we see that the heavens were opened for John to see and that John notes the Holy Spirit descending "as a dove". this is followed by a word of approval from the Father for the Son.

These, then, are the circumstances regarding the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.

### **III. The Significance of the Baptism of Jesus**

With these facts few would dispute. The problem comes, in examining these events, when one attempts to assign some importance to these events. What, then, is the significance of the baptism of Jesus?

#### *What the baptism of Jesus was not*

In examining this question, I think it best to answer first in the negative, *what it is not*, and secondly, in the positive, *what it is*.

The baptism of Jesus is not the following:

--*a genuine response of Jesus to His own sin*. In being baptised we do *not* learn that Jesus was a sinner, nor that He actually felt repentant for His previous thoughts, actions or deeds. To teach thus is to flat-out contradict the clear teaching of the scriptures.

--*an expression of Jesus' desire to be an example*. Many today teach that Jesus came to

earth *simply* to be an example. This was the value of His life and nothing more. Clearly the scriptures do teach us that His life was an example, but this was only a small part of what He came to do. To make this *the* reason for His coming (and His baptism) is to twist the focus of the scriptures away from its emphasis upon the redemptive nature of His coming.

--*the time at which Jesus became the Christ.* As we saw while studying through the epistles of John, some Gnostics actually held that it was during this baptism when the Christ "came upon" Jesus, making Him the Christ. And to support their view they point to the descent of the Spirit. Please note: It was the *Spirit* who came upon Jesus, not the Christ.

--*the time at which Jesus actually became aware of who He was and what His task was.* Others teach that Jesus did not know for what reason HE actually came, having laid aside His godlikeness. And it was at this time when He became "aware" of who He was. I have actually heard a man, who claimed to be a Calvinist, state from a pulpit that this "self-discovery" of Christ actually continued until it culminated in the garden of Gethsemane. And this explains the words of Christ at this point.

My brothers, this is a *gross* misrepresentation of the humanity of Christ at the expense of His deity. Wanting to demonstrate to all that Jesus was actually a man, this pastor has severely distorted if not effectively destroyed the deity of Christ. It was *not* at His baptism that Jesus became aware of who He was. Even the narrative of Jesus in the Temple, at age 12, gives us a quick glimpse of Jesus' own mindset at this time.

#### *What the baptism of Jesus was*

Having looked briefly at what this baptism was not, I would like to now turn to examine what, then, this baptism of Jesus was.

--*the time to reveal Jesus to John.* It is clear from John's words in Jn. 1 that this was one of the main reasons that Jesus was to be baptised. Note v. 31. And it was for this reason that the Father had sent John to baptise.

--*the time for Jesus to openly show His approval of the ministry of John.* Jesus came to John for baptism. Clearly, if Jesus had considered John a false prophet or one who was not of God, then Jesus would not have gone to John for baptism.

But Jesus *was* baptised by John in the Jordan. And in so doing, Jesus authenticated the ministry of John. And in authenticating the ministry of John, Jesus also authenticated the *message* of John, the very message that pointed to Him and His task. John's message was one of preaching the Christ. And in being baptised by John, Jesus was giving His approval of John's message regarding Himself. And in so doing, Jesus settled the question as to whether He and John were working together or against one another.

--*a time that marked the beginning of His ministry.* This is historical fact. Previous to this, we know precious little of the life and times of Jesus. But with His baptism, Jesus now has begun a very different aspect of His life. He now has a most public ministry. For this time forth we find Him moving throughout the land of Judea, ministering and preaching the gospel. This baptism is the *de facto* beginning of His ministry. Note the construction of the narrative of Luke. Upon being baptised, Luke states that Jesus began His ministry at about 30 years of age. And this was presumably at the time of His baptism.

--*a time when the unique relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit was expressly*

*manifested*. Again, this is clear from the gospel record. Throughout this record John speaks the superiority of the baptism of Jesus over His. And in the baptism of Jesus we find the Spirit coming upon the Son. And as John testified in Jn. 1.33, the one upon whom he would see the Spirit descend was the one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit. Just as those whom John was baptised in water, those whom Jesus baptised would be immersed in the Holy Spirit. And the baptism of Jesus was the time that this unique relationship was manifestly revealed.

--*Jesus "fulfilling all righteousness"*. This is Jesus' own explanation for His actions. There is a very real sense in which we may never fully or totally understand the depth of our Saviour's words at this point. However, we do know this: As it relates to the word of God, the concept of righteousness has to do with law-keeping and obedience. One who habitually neglects the word of God could never be referred to as righteous.

But how does this righteousness relate to Christ? Is not Christ *inherently* righteous, by His own character? Yes, He is. However, Christ is also portrayed in the scriptures as one who kept and obeyed the commands and the voice of God. The author of the book of Hebrews states as much when he penned that Christ learned obedience through that which He suffered.

And I think that it is clear that the Father had commanded Christ as regards some very specific tasks related to His coming. Note Paul's words in Phil. 2.5-11. Christ was obedient in *all* that the Father had commanded Him. This baptism was just the first in a series of tasks given Him by the Father. And with this baptism begins the public obedience of Christ.

With this baptism begins Christ's work of redeeming man. This baptism was not the fulfilling of all righteousness, but rather it was the beginning of the fulfilling of this righteousness, a righteousness that would not be completed until His sacrifice upon the cross, where He became obedient to the point of death (cf. Phi. 2.9). Christ was inherently righteous because of His divine nature. And He was shown to be righteous in His obedience to the Father in all things. And this baptism was commanded by the Father. John even states as much in Jn. 1.29-34. This, then, in part, is what is meant by Christ fulfilling all righteousness.

--*a time for God to declare openly His approval of Jesus, His ministry and His purpose*. This truth is also clear from the biblical text. Upon His coming out of the water we find the Father giving public testimony as regards His Son. With Him the Father was well pleased. Well pleased with His actions. Well pleased with His ministry, that was just beginning. Well pleased with His mission. Well pleased with His obedience. With these was the Father pleased. And here we have His testimony.

Although I am sure that a more complete list could be compiled, this, then, is a basic understanding of the significance of the baptism of our Lord.

#### **IV. Observations**

##### 1. *Baptism is a time of prayer*

cf. Lk. 3.21

In the midst of this simple act by the Baptist, we find our Lord praying. And His example is to be our example.

## 2. *Baptism is by immersion*

Those who teach that baptism is by some other means than immersion significantly weaken, if not destroy, the significance of the words of John, that Jesus would baptise in the Holy Spirit. What is being said here is that the Holy Spirit would be given in a manner that up to this point had not been known (cf. Jn. 7.39). The imagery is so much more potent when baptism is understood as immersion. Those whom Jesus baptised would be *immersed* in the Holy Spirit, not just sprinkled or poured. This, in and of itself does not prove the point that baptism is by immersion, but does point in that direction.

## 3. *Those who belong to Jesus have the Holy Spirit*

There are those today that teach that a Christian can have the Spirit but not necessarily be baptised in the Holy Spirit. This is *not* the witness of John. Note that in each passage John refers to Jesus as the one who baptises in the Spirit. There was no division or portioning of the Spirit in John's thinking.

And, again, there was no portioning of the Spirit in the witness of the Father to John. Note that in Jn. 1.33 the Father Himself tells John that Jesus would baptise in the Holy Spirit, *not* that some would be baptised and others only sprinkled. The theology today that teaches such a distinction does not represent faithfully either John's or the Father's testimony to the Son. No, we who are in Christ *have* the Holy Spirit. We have the Comforter. We have the Advocate. He is in us, because of Christ.

## **The Baptism of John the Baptist: A Final Consideration**

Some weeks ago we began a series entitled, *An Exegetical Look at the Doctrine of Baptism*. As we have stated, it is our intent to examine exegetically the relevant passages regarding the doctrine of baptism. Last week we examined the setting and the significance of our Lord's baptism by John the Baptist. Before we begin this evening's lesson, I would like to briefly review our lesson from last week.

### **I. Review of last Lesson--the baptism of Jesus**

- Jesus comes in a crowd, with all the others (cf. Lk. 3.21)
- most likely, Jesus heard John speak, possibly even of Himself.
- Jesus comes for baptism.
- John hinders/Jesus speaks to John
- John baptises
- God's declaration

*What the baptism of Jesus was not:*

- a genuine response of Jesus to His own sin.
- an expression of Jesus' desire to be an example.
- the time at which Jesus became the Christ.
- the time at which Jesus actually became aware of who He was and what His task was.

*What the baptism of Jesus was:*

- the time to reveal Jesus to John. cf. Jn. 1.31.
- the time for Jesus to openly show His approval of the ministry of John.
- a time that marked the beginning of His ministry.
- a time when the unique relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit was expressly manifested.
- Jesus "fulfilling all righteousness".
- a time for God to declare openly His approval of Jesus, His ministry and His purpose.

### **II. The Baptism of John: a Final Consideration**

Before we leave our discussions concerning the baptism of John one final passage needs to be examined: Acts 19.1-7. Upon my giving of the reference, some may think what does the book of Acts have to do with the baptism of John? Did not John die years before the events of Acts 19?

Yes, he did. And this is exactly why this passage requires our attention. In Acts 19 Luke addresses for us the need for re-baptism in some cases and the issue of the relationship between the baptism of John and the baptisms that followed.

- 1 ¶ And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
- 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.
- 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.
- 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.
- 5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.
- 7 And all the men were about twelve.

--Acts 19.1-7

### *The Setting*

Here we find the activities of Paul some 20 years after the death of John the Baptist. While travelling through the hills around Ephesus, he finds some disciples. Paul must surely have been surprised. Paul had even been to the area of Ephesus during his second missionary journey. And now he finds some heretofore unknown disciples (v. 1).

In v. 2 we find a brief conversation of Paul with these individuals regarding the Holy Spirit. A. T. Robertson translates their words as follows: *we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was*. By these words they confess their *total* ignorance of the Holy Spirit.

In that they claimed to be disciples, this answer must have surprised Paul. He then asks them, "Into what were you baptised?" Into the baptism of John they respond.

It is interesting to note how Paul here responds to them. He actually preaches to them the message of John, the same kind of message John preached. Note the similarities between John's message (as seen in the gospel record) and Paul's message here. Both speak of repentance. Both speak of one coming after John. Both speak of the salvific work of the Christ (cf. Jn. 1.29-34) in forgiving sins. And thus Paul preached to them.

In v. 5 we find these men, having believed Paul's message, were baptised (v. 5). In v. 6 we see that they were genuine children of God, having received the Holy Spirit, the very Spirit that they professed to know nothing of only moments ago.

These, then, are the verses before us.

### *The Significance of These Verses*

The problem with these verses is not in *what* happened, but in the *significance* one attributes to these events. Some have thought that the significance of these verses is that Paul finds some disciples of John, and in that they had not heard of Christ, they needed to be baptised again. And so this is what Paul does. And in so doing, Paul (or Luke) is teaching us that there is a distinction between the baptism (and preaching) of Jesus and John. But this cannot be for the following reasons:

--*these men were not true disciples of John.* "But how can you say that? Does not the word of God call them disciples?" The fact that they have the term "disciple" used to describe them means nothing. In John 4.1-2 Jesus is said to be making more disciples than John. But in John 6 we find that many "of His disciples" who followed Jesus went back and walked with Him no more (cf. Jn. 6.60-61, 66). Clearly, these that left were not true disciples.

Their own testimony also betrays their true character. As we have already noted, they confessed a total ignorance of the Holy Spirit. But in so doing, they not only confess an ignorance of the Holy Spirit, but also of the ministry of John the Baptist as well. In every recorded instance of the preaching of John the Baptist we find John mentioning the Holy Spirit. Note Mt. 3.1-12, esp. vv. 11-12; Mk. 1.7-8; Lk. 3.1-18, esp. v. 16-17; Jn. 1.29-31, 3.22-36, esp. v. 34.

We also find that John also spent much of his time preaching concerning the one who was coming after him, that is, Jesus. But here, we find these men seemingly ignorant of this fact, even though they claimed to be disciples of John.

They knew nothing of the Christ. A good example of one who was a disciple of John, who did know that the Christ was coming after John, but did not know that the Christ was Jesus, was Apollos. Note Luke's testimony in Acts 18.24. Apollos was a genuine disciple of John. Note Luke's words in v. 25: "he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord,...". He was acquainted with John. He knew the Baptist's teaching. He preached Christ as the Baptist did. The only thing we have here is that Priscilla and Aquilla explained the word of God more accurately to him.

And then what? Nothing. As far as the biblical record is concerned, Apollos' baptism by John was adequate. He was not baptised again. Apollos was a true disciple of the Lord, but his knowledge was deficient, incomplete. But that which he knew was biblical.

These men in Acts 19 were not true disciples. And why not? They did not have deficient knowledge, but defective, errant, heretical knowledge. They were not even familiar with the teaching of the man they claimed to follow. And what they did believe Paul or Luke does not say. Clearly these were men who had not had the gospel preached to them, either by John (cf. Lk. 3.18 *euangellizomai* in the Greek), by Jesus or the apostles. The knowledge they had was wrong. They were no true disciples.

One may ask, "Why were they then called disciples?" First, this may have been the term which they used to refer to themselves. Second, they could not be referred to as pagans, for they did not follow the pagan religions of the day. Also the terms "Jew" or "Christian" would not have fit them.

--*John preached the gospel to those who came to hear him.* This is what we noted in Lk. 3.18, when we discussed the baptism of John. Luke states in that verse that John preached the gospel (*euangellizomai* in the Greek) to those who came to him. And one can also compare his message with that of Jesus Himself. Mark 1 gives us a good concise comparison. And as we have just seen, Paul preached the same message to these men, using an outline similar to that used by the Baptist Himself. Thus, it is unfair to say that the baptism of John was qualitatively different from that of Jesus and the apostles after them, when the other aspects of their ministries were similar. And as we have noted repeatedly, John *did* preach the gospel to them. Thus, his baptism was a gospel baptism.

But one may say that John's audience was different, that he was sent to the Jews. This

means nothing. For even from John's own ministry we find John baptising and instructing soldiers, presumably Roman soldiers, who occupied the land. The Jewish Temple guards of the day do not seem to fit the instruction given by John in Lk. 3.14. Thus, John did preach to gentiles. John not only was the last of the Old Testament prophets, he was the first of the New Testament evangelists.

Peter, also, preached primarily to the Jews. But this does not mean that he had a qualitatively *different* gospel or message or baptism. Thus, to state that John's baptism was different solely because he had a different audience is to fail to discern the unity of the ministry of John and Jesus, as illustrated by the scriptures, and to arbitrarily divide the beginnings of the gospel ministry within the land of Judaea.

In conclusion, then, there is no qualitative distinction between the baptism of John and those who came after him, and this Acts 19 passage cannot be made to teach otherwise. Rather, when properly exegeted and understood, Paul (or Luke) *is* teaching us that there is *no distinction* between the baptism (and preaching) of John and Jesus and/or the early church.

### **III. Observations**

1. One can be baptised for several years, and consider themselves a disciple, and know nothing of Christ

cf. Acts 19.1-7

This is one of the main lessons of Acts 19. Cf also John 3 and the discussion of Jesus with Nicodemus. Note also the discussion that Jesus had in John 6 with the Jews.

2. Correct doctrine is a sign of a work of grace

Note the situation with the men of Ephesus. Paul knew by their *doctrine* that something was wrong. He had not been there long enough to see how they lived their lives. He had only been there long enough to speak with them. And this was long enough for Paul to discern that something was amiss. Their doctrine revealed their spiritual condition.

3. John did preach the gospel

cf. Acts 19.4, where Paul preaches with an outline of John's preaching to these men.

4. Unless one was baptised understanding the true biblical doctrine of the Christ, he is to be re-baptised

Again, note the example of the men from Ephesus



## The Baptism of Jesus and His disciples

### I. Introduction/Review

Some weeks ago we began a series entitled, *An Exegetical Look at the Doctrine of Baptism*. Three weeks ago, we examined a final consideration concerning the baptism of John the Baptist. We examined Acts 19, where Paul and his colleagues find supposed disciples of John in the region of Ephesus. But upon examining them, Paul finds that they did not have a basic or rudimentary understanding of the teaching of John the Baptist. They knew nothing of the Lord, of whom John spoke. Nor did they even know of the Holy Spirit. Even a cursory examination finds that John spoke often of both the Christ and the Holy Spirit. But these knew nothing of either the Christ nor of the Holy Spirit. As such, they were not truly disciples of John, nor followers of the LORD.

In that they were not disciples, Paul preaches the gospel of Christ, the gospel that John himself was involved in preaching, to these men. Graciously the Lord converts them, giving them the Holy Spirit.

In concluding, we made the following observations:

- One can be baptised for several years, and consider themselves a disciple, and know nothing of Christ
- Correct doctrine is a sign of a work of grace
- John did preach the gospel
- Unless one was baptised understanding the true biblical doctrine of the Christ, he is to be re-baptised

This, then was our last lesson.

### II. The Baptism of Jesus and His disciples

This evening, I would like to briefly discuss the baptism of Jesus and his disciples. From the biblical record it is clear that John was not the only one who was engaged in baptism.

- 22 ¶ After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.
- 23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.
- 24 For John was not yet cast into prison.
- 25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.
- 26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him.
- 27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.
- 28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.
- 29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.
- 30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

- 31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.
- 32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.
- 33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.
- 34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*.
- 35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.
- 36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.
- 1 ¶ When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,
- 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)
- 3 He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

--Jn. 3.22-4.2

In these verses we find that Jesus was also engaged in practicing the rite of baptism upon his followers. We need to note, at the outset, that the passage that is before us is one of the earliest glimpses into the ministry of Christ on record. When I preached on this matter in 1999, I failed to recognise this fact. But I do think that it is worth noting that, at its earliest, the ministry of Jesus involved baptism.

Most commentators see that the ministry of John and Jesus overlapped no more than a year. Thus, it seems that both Jesus and John were co-ministers of the gospel somewhere between 6 months to a year. What we find here in Jn. 3 must be somewhere near the end of this time frame, in that Jesus (who was unknown just a year before) is now seen as making more disciples than John (cf. v. 26). It is also interesting to note that up to this point in the recorded testimony of the gospels, none of the gospels give record of individual miracles. When one examines the testimonies of Matthew, Mark and Luke, each one of their records begin recording the ministry of Jesus *after* John was cast into prison. It is only John, here in these first few chapters of his gospel, that we find record of the ministry of Jesus *prior* to the imprisonment of John.

What we can learn of this is that apart from the miracles (cf. Jn. 2.23) that Jesus did perform, it appears that the ministry of John and Jesus were incredibly similar. Both were involved in preaching the coming kingdom (Compare Mt. 3.1-2 with 4. 17.). Both were involved in baptising. Both were involved in making disciples. Thus, it seems that there was a real unity and continuity in the ministries of these two men. In fact, there was so much so that after Herod had John beheaded, that he thought that John was raised up in the person of Jesus. In any event, it appears that baptism was an important part of the ministry of Christ.

In turning to this passage we can note the following:

*--there seems to be no difference between the baptism of Jesus and John.* In the latter part of ch. 3 we find a very interesting situation. In v. 22 it is noted that Jesus and His disciples are now also baptising in the land of Judea. This point is not unnoticed by the disciples of John.

In v. 26, we find his disciples of John the Baptist coming to him, complaining about Jesus: *Behold! He is baptising and all are coming to Him!* John's answer is very instructive. This would have been the perfect time to point out the differences between John and his ministry on the one hand, and Jesus and His ministry on the other. "Well, you see, Jesus and I have different ministries. I was sent *only* to the lost sheep of Israel. Jesus' ministry is larger than mine. Do not fear; our baptisms are different. My baptism is preparing them for His

baptism.”

But these are *not* the words we find here. In fact, John’s response reads more like they *are* doing the same thing. The only difference is now it is Jesus who is to shine, not John. Note John’s words in v. 27-30. Both of these men were involved in the same ministry. It was now time for Jesus to begin to be exalted and John to diminish.

The fact that both *were* involved in the same ministry can be seen in the fact that both had *identical* messages in identical places. Compare Mt. 3.1-2 with 4.17. Both were involved preaching the gospel (cf Lk. 3.18 [John] with Mk. 1.15 [Jesus]). Unless there was teaching that was contrary, we can (rightly) infer that their baptisms were the same as well. If they were not, this would have been mentioned somewhere in the gospel record.

*--those baptised by Jesus were considered disciples.* As we have previously seen in this series, there was a relationship between baptism and repentance. Here, in vv. 4.1-2 we find that there is a relationship between baptism and discipleship. Those baptised were considered disciples. Note the words in v. 1 of ch. 4. Those who came for baptism were not only repenting of their sin, confessing their sins, but they were considered followers of the one so teaching. Thus, as a follower or a disciple, they were expected to obey their teacher and to walk in his teaching.

*--not all who were baptised were true disciples.* Not everyone who comes for baptism is a true disciple. This may not be so self evident from this text. But please note the situation. Jesus, by the Jordan, making and baptising more disciples than John. Now please turn to Jn. 6. In Jn. 6 we find the reaction of many of Jesus’ disciples to His teaching. Note v. 6.60-61. Upon hearing His teaching regarding partaking of His flesh and blood. Jesus speaks with them a bit more, and in v. 64 is His assessment: *But there are some of you who do not believe.* Disciples. Baptised disciples. Not believing. And in v. 66 we find their reaction to Him: they turned back. Thus we see, that not everyone who is baptised, who claims to be a disciple, truly is.

These, then, are the verses before us.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. John and Jesus were co-ministers of the gospel.

John preached the same message as the Christ. His message pointed forward to the one that was to come. Jesus’ message spoke of the one who had come down from heaven. They both had the same message. Their vantage points many have been slightly different. But it was the same message.

#### 2. Behold the blessedness and the grace given to John, in that he rejoices in the fact that he was to decrease.

Cf. v. 30

#### 3. Even though baptism was an important part of the ministry of Christ, it was a minor part.

Cf. Mt. 28.16-20

#### 4. Behold the wisdom of God, in that Jesus did not baptise his disciples, but that his followers did.

Cf. I Cor. 1.10-17

5. One can be baptised for several years, and consider themselves a disciple, and know nothing of Christ

We noted this truth when we examined Acts 19. Now here we find it in the life and ministry of Jesus. Those that were his disciples, baptised by his own disciples, left him. They followed Him no more. Their baptism meant nothing to them.

## The Commission to Baptise

Some weeks ago we began a series entitled, *An Exegetical Look at the Doctrine of Baptism*. Thus far, we have been moving through the biblical data, examining it from a historical perspective, as the development of baptism unfolded. Last week we examined the baptism practiced by Jesus and His disciples. I would like to briefly review the second point of our lesson from last week, that of the baptism practiced by Jesus and His disciples, in that it is *this* baptism that forms the background for the baptism mentioned in our Lord's commands, that we will examine momentarily.

### I. Review of last Lesson--the baptism of Jesus and His disciples

cf Jn. 3.22-4.2

--*there seems to be no difference between the baptism of Jesus and John*. cf. vv. 22, 26 and John's response. He could have set the record straight at this point. But he does not. Both of these men were involved in the same ministry:

--*identical messages* (cf. Mt. 3.1-2 with 4. 17).

--*identical ministries*. Both were involved preaching the gospel (cf Lk. 3.18 [John] with Mk. 1.15 [Jesus]).

--we can (rightly) infer that their *baptisms were the same as well*. This is nowhere contradicted in the gospels or the subsequent writings of the NT.

--*those baptised by Jesus were considered disciples*. cf. Jn. 4.1-2

--*not all who were baptised were true disciples*. cf. Jn. 4.1-3 with Jn. 6.60-61,64,66.

### II. The Commission to Baptise

Little is said in the gospel record about baptism after the practice is introduced at the beginning of the ministries of John and Jesus. The next main area of mention of baptism concerns the commission to baptise given by Jesus to His disciples after His crucifixion and just prior to His ascension and the establishing of the church in Acts 2. And it is this commission and baptism's relation to it that will engage the remainder of our time.

Although not all of these passages mention baptism expressly, they are relevant in that they give us a more complete picture of the total commission given:

16 ¶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

--Mt. 28.16-20

14 ¶ Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their

unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

- 15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
- 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
- 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;
- 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.
- 19 ¶ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.
- 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

--Mk. 16.14-20

- 44 And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.
- 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,
- 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:
- 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
- 48 And ye are witnesses of these things.
- 49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

--Lk. 24.44-49

- 19 ¶ Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.
- 20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.
- 21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.
- 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:
- 23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

--Jn. 20.19-23

- 4 And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.
- 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.
- 6 ¶ When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
- 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.
- 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
- 9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

--Acts 1.4-9

In examining these passages in the context of baptism we can see learn the following:

--*the command to baptise is divine.* cf Mt. 28.18-20. From the text this is self-evident. The command was no invention of man. The command to baptise was no religious invention. The command to baptise was a *divine* command. This is the way it was given to John, when he began his ministry. Although not mentioned in the scriptures, it is evident that Christ also had command from the Father to baptise. And now, Jesus Christ, the Son of God was commanding that this practice was to continue. This command was and is a divine command, coming from the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity

--*the command to baptise is based in all authority.* cf Mt. 28.18. This truth is related to the last. The fact that this command comes from the second Person of the Trinity assumes as much. But contextually, this truth is expressly stated. Note v. 18. Christ mentions that all authority in heaven and earth was given to Him. *All* authority. In heaven and earth. He, this Christ who had just been crucified, is the one possessing all authority and power.

(Note: as a side, that it would have been blasphemous to speak these words of a mere mortal or creature. Yet this is exactly what the Jehovah's Witnesses do. They state that a creature now possesses all authority and power. Yet only Christ, being God, could rightfully possess that which was rightfully His and that which He had lain aside in the incarnation. Christ did not lay aside any part of His character or essence, but He did lay aside His glory and the privilege of this authority.)

In so stating that He alone has all power and authority, He also affirms His headship over the body. As such He had the authority to order the continuation of this practice within the church, His body. The command to baptise is rooted and founded in *all* authority--the authority of Christ.

--*baptism is part of the discipleship process.* cf. Mt. 28.19. This truth is also self-evident from the text. Part of the process of making disciples was to baptise them: make disciples, baptising and teaching them... . Baptism was clearly part of the discipleship process.

--*baptism is not the "end" of discipleship or Christian work.* cf. Mt. 28.19-20. This truth is related to the last. From even a cursory reading of the text, it would seem that no one could see baptism as the end of the discipleship process. And, when questioning individuals regarding what part baptism has in the discipleship process, few, if any, would state that it was the end of the discipleship process.

But this truth is not practiced today. In examining the practice of discipleship by many of the evangelical "churches" of the day one would have the distinct impression that getting a person baptised is getting them into the church. Whatever else happens to them after they are in the church is icing on the cake. They are baptised and they are members. I was actually raised in such a church. After I was baptised, I was handed a Bible and sent on my merry way. "Another one won for the Lord."

My friends, *this* is a woefully inadequate concept of the discipleship process. In fact, this is *not* discipleship at all. Clearly from the text, baptism in fact was part of the beginning of the discipleship process, not the end. Teaching was to follow. Any such movement that sees or practices baptism as an end in itself has no footsteps in the word of God.

--*baptism comes after preaching.* cf. Mk. 16.15. In Mark 16 we find the next recorded instance of our Lord's words regarding baptism. Here we see the truth that baptism comes after preaching. This was the biblical practice of John the Baptist: *And John the Baptist came preaching...* . This was the practice of our Lord as well. And here we find it was to be

the practice of the apostles as they went into the world. As they went they were to preach the gospel. And in v. 16 we find the connection between preaching and baptism: the ones who believed that which was preached (ie--the gospel) were to be baptised. Baptism comes after preaching.

Before we leave this point, we need to briefly examine the practice of infant baptism. The practice of infant baptism does not fit the biblical practice we have just mentioned. Here, in our text, we find baptism coming after preaching (and belief). But in the paedo-baptist scenario we find a reversal. In virtually all of the congregations where infant baptism is practiced we have the person being baptised *prior to* preaching. There is no repentance. There is no confession of sins. At the time of the preaching these cannot even understand the preaching. And yet they are baptised. This is not biblical. It does not follow the biblical sequence of events. As seen in Mk. 16, baptism clearly came after preaching.

And will do no good to state that this passage does not address the issue of infant baptism, that it is silent as regards this issue. Please note: an argument from silence is exactly that--silent. *It says nothing*. And one cannot build a doctrine on nothing.

--*baptism is not something that guarantees salvation*. cf. Mk. 16.16. For those of the Reformed persuasion, this sentiment goes without saying. We are those who teach salvation by grace alone through faith alone. And with this teaching the evangelical church claims to agree.

But again, it is in the *practice* of many churches that the true nature of what they believe can be seen. There are churches today that teach that unless one is baptised he cannot be saved. And this is one of the passages used to support this claim. Aside from flatly denying a multitude of scriptures on the true nature of salvation, Gal. 1 addresses this issue. This teaching is of hell. This is the teaching of the Judaisers. They taught that one must be circumcised to be saved. They added, ever so slightly, a condition to salvation. And Paul rightly condemns such teaching. Anyone who teaches such doctrine is no brother, for Paul states that the one so teaching is anathema, that is, damned. They are damned.

We need to note that the teaching of Gal. 1 does not just cover circumcision. It speaks loud and clear to the addition of *anything* that becomes a condition for salvation. The Bible condemns all such conditions, not just circumcision, as anathema. A man is saved by grace, God's free and sovereign grace, that He Himself imparts to whosoever He wishes. Period. There are no requirements for salvation, be it circumcision, baptism, or whatever may be proposed. As we have already seen in our study concerning the doctrines of grace, God and God alone, by the pleasure of His will, rendered certain from all eternity the salvation of each and every child of God.

And even from the text before us we can see that baptism didn't save. Jesus Himself declares that it was the one not believing that would not be saved. Baptism has nothing to do with salvation. Baptism is not something that guarantees salvation.

--*baptism is based in and accompanied by the same message that was preached by Jesus and John*. cf. Lk. 24.46-47. This is evident from the facts at hand. Upon a careful examination of the ministries of both John the Baptist and Jesus, we can see that along with this command to baptise was the command to continue to preach the same message that had begun with John and which Christ Himself had continued. John did not have a different message than Jesus. Jesus did not have a different message than the early church. They all had the same message. This command to preach repentance was nothing more than a command for the apostles to continue preaching as Jesus (and they themselves) had been



preaching over the past few years.

Likewise, the command to baptise was simply a command to *continue* doing that which they had already been doing throughout the course of the ministry of Christ. Thus, here we see that baptism is based in and accompanied by the same message that was preached by Jesus and John.

*--the command to baptise was global in scope.*

cf. Acts 1.8. Although this truth is mentioned in Mt. 28, where the disciples are told to go into all nations, here in the book of Acts this truth is spelled out so much more clearly. We can see the truth that baptism was not just to be (or become) a Jewish practice. Baptism was for all. Jews. Samaritans. Gentiles. Regardless of race, previous religious instruction, educational standing, all were to be baptised as any other. This practice was to be a universal practice.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. Baptism is not an ordinance for the "mature"

As practiced today, many withhold baptism for months, to ensure that the one being baptised is truly a believer. But as we have seen in the weeks past and again today, baptism was something that was practiced upon new believers, upon those who were repenting, as evidenced by the confessing of sins. To withhold the ordinance for some "waiting period" is to not follow the biblical example and to guard the ordinance in an unreasonable and unbiblical manner.

It seems to me that the issue here is one of misplaced emphasis. Baptists practice this type of waiting period to ensure, as much as they can, that the one baptised is a believer. "After all, we believe in *believer's* baptism, do we not?"

Only the regenerate, the true children of God have a right to be baptised. But baptism is not to be withheld until such time as it is seen fitting by others that one may be baptised. Rather, one is to be baptised when, after coming under the hearing of the preaching of the word of God, he is caused to be born from above, being given faith and repentance. "And how are we to know if one is given this faith and repentance?" The same way John and Jesus did: the ones coming will be truly repentant for their sins, as manifested by their confession of these sins. And if they later fail to walk in the truth, were we too hasty in baptising them? Most certainly not. Our Lord had the exact same situation (cf. Jn. 6.60ff), and no one would dare accuse Him of baptising someone too hastily. If they fail to walk according to the instruction of the word of God, this was not a matter of baptising one too hastily, but this then becomes a matter of church discipline. Baptism is not an ordinance for the mature.

#### 2. Unless there is preaching, there should be no baptism

This is the biblical order. We have seen this in the ministry of John the Baptist. This was the practice of our Lord. He was constantly teaching those who came to Him. And this is the command that He gives in Mk. 16. The apostles were to go into all the world and preach. Without the gospel being preached there is no biblical object of faith. Preaching comes before baptism. Regeneration comes before baptism. Faith comes before baptism. Repentance comes before baptism. Confession of sins comes before baptism. Without any of these one should not be baptised.

In practice, this is the only rationale for having someone wait to be baptised. Today there are so many false gospels being proclaimed today. One can say that they have believed the gospel and in reality know nothing of the gospel they claim to believe. One must be under biblical preaching before he can be baptised. There were many in John's day that heard the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. But that teaching was not biblical teaching. This is why John taught them.

Without one being under biblical preaching one cannot honestly claim to believe the gospel, to have repented of their sins, when they know nothing of the doctrines of the gospel.

To some, this may sound as if I am waffling from my last observation. I am not. Baptism is not for the mature. But unless one has been under true biblical preaching, there is no sure basis for his confession and repentance. Unless there is preaching, true biblical preaching, there should be no baptism.

## The Baptism of the Early Church

As many of you are well aware, for the past several weeks we have been examining the doctrine of baptism from an historical viewpoint, examining the history of the practice. Two weeks ago we examined the commission to baptise, given by Jesus prior to His ascension. This evening, we will examine the implementation of this commission by the early church. In that this commission by Jesus has great bearing upon what takes place in the book of Acts, I would like to take a few minutes and review our notes from last week.

### I. Review of last Lesson--the commission to baptise

\* read Mt. 28.16-20; Mk. 16.14-18; Lk. 24.44-49; Jn. 20.19-23; Acts 1.4-8 \*

- the command to baptise is divine. cf Mt. 28.18-20.
- the command to baptise is based in all authority. cf Mt. 28.18.
- baptism is part of the discipleship process. cf. Mt. 28.19.
- baptism is not the "end" of discipleship or Christian work. cf. Mt. 28.19-20.
- baptism comes after preaching. cf. Mk. 16.15.
- baptism is not something that guarantees salvation. cf. Mk. 16.16.
- baptism is based in and accompanied by the same message that was preached by Jesus and John. cf. Lk. 24.46-47.
- the command to baptise was global in scope. cf. Acts 1.8-9.

### II. The Baptism of the Early Church

As we have just reviewed, just prior to His ascension, Christ repeatedly mentions the commission to baptise to His followers. In the remainder of our time we will examine the implementation of this command as it is revealed in the book of Acts.

- 37 ¶ Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?
- 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.
- 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
- 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

--Acts 2.37-41

- 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
- 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

--Acts 8.12-13

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.  
36 And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is water*; what doth hinder me to be baptized?  
37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.  
38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

--Acts 8.35-38

44 ¶ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.  
45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.  
46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,  
47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?  
48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

--Acts 10.44-48

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.  
13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*.  
14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.  
15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

--Acts 16.12-15

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.  
28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.  
29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,  
30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?  
31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.  
32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.  
33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their stripes*; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.  
34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

--Acts 16.27-34

7 ¶ And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.  
8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

--Acts 18.7-8

Although mentioned elsewhere in the book of Acts, the above verses are the major instances of baptism in this book, and give us a general idea as to how baptism was practiced in the early church. From these verses we can learn the following about baptism:

--*baptism is an initiatory rite*. cf. Acts 16.33. We touched upon this truth in our last lesson. Baptism, as seen in the commission to baptise, and as practiced in Acts 16 was a practice that could occur very early on in the spiritual lives of those baptised. Further, as we have

seen in relation to the baptism by the disciples of Jesus, the one so baptised was identified as a disciple (cf. Jn. 4.1f).

--*baptism follows preaching.* cf Acts 2.38, 8.12, 8.38, 9.18, 10.47, 16.33. We touched upon this truth last week as well. Baptism, when practiced after the biblical model, follows preaching, specifically, the preaching of the gospel.

Note specifically Acts 2. First, in the sermon recorded here, Peter answers the questions as regards their physical condition, stating that it was not due to wine, but the work of the Holy Spirit. Immediately upon answering this contention he begins to preach to them. Note in v. 22 Peter begins to teach concerning Jesus. And it is this teaching concerning Christ that preceded baptism.

Note also the same pattern in 8.5, 8.30-35, 10.34-43. In each instance preaching, specifically preaching about the person and work of Christ, preceded baptism. It is the biblical pattern to preach prior to administering the ordinance of baptism. We have mentioned previously the significance of this as it relates to the paedobaptist contention that one can be baptised and have no knowledge of Christ. This simply is not biblical, and this *was not* the practice of the early church.

--*baptism is still related to repentance.* As we noted in our last meeting the commission to baptise was to follow a message of repentance. We also noted that this message of repentance was the same message that was borne by John the Baptist and Jesus Himself. Both preached repentance in their ministry. There was no distinguishable difference in the messages of these two men.

And last week we find Jesus giving command to continue this message. The message of the apostles in the early church was to be the continuation of the very same message and ministry begun by John and continued by Jesus. And now we find the apostles carrying out the command of their Master in this regard. The apostles preached repentance, just as John and Jesus. Note Acts 2.36-38, 3.19, 8.22, 11.18. And in many of these contexts we find the biblical response to repentance: baptism.

--*baptism is when "church membership" begins* cf. Acts 2.38-47. This is a very evident truth from Acts 2. Those who were baptised were considered to be part of this new work. Note the following verses: in v. 41 Luke states that those who repented, gladly receiving Peter's word, were baptised. Immediately he states that approximately 3000 were added, presumably, to the church.

The material that follows is also instructive. Those baptised were those who were continuing in the apostles' doctrine, those who were participating in the breaking of bread (ie--the Lord's Supper), and in prayers. In vv. 45ff we also find those who were baptised *were* this new body. In v. 47 Luke states that the Lord was adding to His church. Those who were baptised were considered to be part of this church.

The same truth can be found in the other passages previously mentioned. Thus, we can see that baptism is when church membership begins.

--*baptism comes after belief.* In examining many of the very same verses that we have been examining, some churches deny this truth. They teach that belief comes with baptism. Or that belief is caused by baptism. Or that baptism is that which saves a person. They note Acts 2.38: "Repent and be baptised...and you will be saved." "Thus, unless you are baptised you cannot be saved." This, my brethren, is heresy. This passage (nor do the others we

have examined) does not teach such a doctrine.

In fact, Luke actually teaches the exact opposite in the book of Acts. Note Acts 2.41--those who *had gladly received* (past tense) the word were baptised. These were not saved in their baptism. They were saved *prior to* baptism, manifesting their salvation in their rejoicing in the word of God. Note also Acts 8.37-38. It was only after the man confessed belief that Philip would baptise him. And the same is true of Cornelius in Acts 10. The book of Acts most certainly teaches that *baptism follows belief*.

--*baptism does not guarantee belief*. Some, upon hearing my words may think I am now denying the very truth I just stated. However, as we noted when we studied the baptism practiced by Jesus and his disciples, not all those baptised were believers (note His own words to his disciples in Jn. 6.61-64). And this is also taught by Luke in the book of Acts. Note the following:

--the case of Ananias and Sapphira. In Acts 5 we find the record of their sin. Please note the context. In the latter part of chapter 4 many of the disciples were coming to the apostles and laying money at their feet. And according to the biblical record, a disciple, and one who was considered a member of this new work, was one who was baptised. But we find Peter's assessment of them both--Satan had filled their heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. Even though they were baptised, they were not believers.

--again, this same truth is found in Acts 8. In Acts 8 we find Philip preaching the word to the Samaritans. In v. 9ff a certain man named Simon, who had practiced sorcery or magic, was also baptised (cf. v. 13). But in v. 19 we find him trying to buy the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter's response in vv. 20-21 is instructive: "You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God." Peter here declares that his heart was not right, that is, *that he was not a true believer*. Whatever "belief" he had back in v. 13, it was not true saving faith, according to Peter's own words.

Again, we have an example of one who was baptised and it was subsequently revealed through his actions that he was not a believer. Baptism does not guarantee belief.

--*baptism is not always limited to a "church" setting*. The book of Acts teaches us this truth as well. Two of the prominent baptism recorded in the book were not practiced in a "church setting". Note the examples of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8. This man was on his way back to Ethiopia, to serve his Queen. At the direction of the Lord Philip joins this man (v. 29). After explaining to this man the truth of what he was reading (v. 35), the man expresses interest in baptism. Rather than stating that he should postpone his meeting and come to his "crusade" and be baptised then, Philip baptised him when they came to water.

And the same is true in the case of Cornelius, in Acts 10. After coming to them, at the request of Cornelius, Peter preaches the gospel to them. After seeing that God had poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit upon them, he states that baptism would be the correct course of action (cf. v. 47). And in v. 48, he *commanded* that they be baptised. Thus we can see that baptism has been practiced in venues other than the "church meeting".

However, before leaving this topic, one additional word needs to be said. At the time of these baptisms, there was no established church existed in many areas. Thus, it would be very difficult for baptism to be practiced in many areas in a church setting. However, by mentioning this characteristic, I think that we can see that in instances of missionary work and church planting it is perfectly reasonable that baptism be practiced as the need arises.

*--baptism is only properly administered by officers of the church.* After hearing my last statement some may think I am an advocate of the modern idea that anyone can practice the ordinances of God anywhere they want. This simply is not the case. In the case of this last characteristic of baptism I was only pointing out the fact that some of the baptisms practiced in Acts were not done in a "church setting". Here, in this characteristic, I am affirming the fact that in every recorded instance of baptism, baptism was practiced only by those recognised as officers within the church. Nowhere in the book of Acts (or in the pages of the scriptures in general) do we find the truth that anyone can baptise another. This is simply not taught in the word of God.

In the book of Acts we have only the apostles recorded as baptising on the Day of Pentecost. And subsequent to this we only have elders, deacons or those under their authority (such as Paul, the evangelist-missionary) administering this rite. For the average Christian to take this authority upon himself is presumptuous at best. Baptism is a rite that is only to be practiced by those in God-given authority.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. Not all baptised individuals are true believers

We have had this observation repeatedly before. Not all belief is true belief. Nor are all those that are baptised true believers. We have seen this with Ananias and Sapphira. We have seen this with Simon the Sorcerer. And we will undoubtedly see this today: individuals coming for baptism, apparently repenting and confessing sins. Only later is it revealed that they were not truly disciples. Jesus Himself had this same problem (cf. Jn. 6.60ff). We will have this problem as well.

And remember the failure is not in the one administering the baptism. To baptise those who come for baptism, those repenting and confessing their sins is not presumptuous, but the biblical example of John, Jesus and the early church.

#### 2. There can be no baptism without biblical preaching, the true preaching of Christ

This also we have seen before. There is no record of those being baptised to whom the gospel was not preached. The preaching of Christ precedes baptism, for the preaching of Christ precedes salvation. We are not like those evangelicals (eg--Billy Graham and Robert Schuler) who deny the necessity of the gospel for salvation. For Peter himself is recorded as saying there is no other name under heaven by which a man may be saved. Belief comes before baptism. And thus, the gospel comes before belief (cf. Rom. 10.14-17). One is not saved by the gospel *itself*, for salvation is something wrought in the person by the Holy Spirit. But one cannot have biblical belief unless he has the biblical object of belief--Christ as presented in the gospel. And Peter and the other apostles understood this. Thus, true, biblical preaching of the Christ preceded the administering of the ordinance of baptism. Thus I observe in the second place, there can be no baptism without biblical preaching, the true preaching of Christ.

#### 3. There is not one recorded instance of one being baptised that did not manifest belief, repentance and/or confession of sin

Baptism, as we have seen, was not an ordinance that was given to just anyone. Those baptised were those that manifested some faith, repentance and/or confession of sins. This was true with John the Baptist. This was true with our Lord. And we have seen this to be true in the history of the early church as well.

But one may wish to say to me, "But what about Simon, in Acts 8? Did he manifest belief and repentance?" All I can say is what the text does. The text states that he did believe. Yet later Peter himself declares that he was not a believer. At the time of Simon's baptism, something must have been manifested. This is why the text states that he believed. Yet clearly, this belief was not saving faith. Thus the manifestations were not genuine either. The fact that this one was baptised does not invalidate the practice of baptising those coming for baptism who have some evidence of the work of God. Again, this is not an issue of the failure of administration of the ordinance properly. No, this then becomes a church discipline issue, as we can see in Peter's example. Clearly, if Simon was not considered a believer in the first place, he would have never been baptised. Only those who manifest some type of evidence are the fit subjects of baptism. Thus the practice of infant baptism is seen again to be unbiblical.



## **The Baptism of Cornelius**

### **I. Review/Introduction**

For several weeks, we have been examining the history of the doctrine of baptism. We have examined the baptism of John the Baptist and how repentance, confession of sin and preaching concerning the Christ and the Holy Spirit were related to his baptism. We then examined the baptism of Jesus himself by John the Baptist. We then moved to the baptism of Jesus and how he was involved also in the practice of baptism, even at one point baptising more disciples than John. We noted that the baptism of Jesus was really the continuation of the same baptism that was begun by John. Repentance, confession of sin and preaching still figured large in and around the baptism of Jesus.

Most recently, we examined the practice of baptism within the early church, as recorded in the book of Acts. These baptisms were very important in instructing us in a proper understanding of the doctrine and the practice of baptism that was practiced by the early church. This baptism also was seen to be the continuation of that which was started by John. Most notably, we saw that those baptised by John were not re-baptised unless there was a question as to whether one was really a disciple. There were two examples of this situation which we examined. The first was the men in the hills of Ephesus who called themselves disciples. These were baptised by Paul because they were not really true disciples of John, knowing nothing of John's message.

The second case concerns Apollos. Apollos was an Alexandrian Jew that was a zealous disciple of John who went preaching the message of Christ, as was taught by John the Baptist. He was not baptised when he was taught "more accurately" concerning the Christ by Priscilla and Aquilia (cf. Acts 18.26). There was no need for him to be baptised, in that he had already been baptised.

Lastly, we examined the numerous baptisms recorded in the book of Acts. From these instances of baptism practiced by the early church we saw the following:

- baptism is an initiatory rite.*
- baptism follows preaching.*
- baptism is still related to repentance.*
- baptism is when "church membership" begins*
- baptism comes after belief.*
- baptism does not guarantee belief.*
- baptism is not always limited to a "church" setting.*
- baptism is only properly administered by officers of the church.*

### **II. The Baptism of Cornelius**

Before we finish examining the historical manifestation of the rite of baptism and leave this section of scripture with its very important examples of baptism recorded for us in the book of Acts, I feel compelled to stop and examine at least two of these baptisms. So for the next two weeks, God-willing, we will be examining two instances of baptism more closely.

After several weeks meditating upon this topic and examining the following passages, it has come to my attention that many within the Reformed church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may not have the proper understanding of many of the passages concerning baptism that we have examined recently. This evening, I would like to look at the baptism of Cornelius, the Roman centurion. Thus, please turn with me to the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Acts:

- 1 ¶ There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,
- 2 A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.
- 3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.
- 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.
- 5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter:
- 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.
- 7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;
- 8 And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

- 19 ¶ While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.
- 20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.
- 21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what *is* the cause wherefore ye are come?
- 22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.
- 23 Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.
- 24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.
- 25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*.
- 26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.
- 27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.
- 28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.
- 29 Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?
- 30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,
- 31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.
- 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.
- 33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.
- 34 ¶ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
- 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.
- 36 The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)
- 37 That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

- 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.
- 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:
- 40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;
- 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.
- 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead.
- 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.
- 44 ¶ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.
- 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,
- 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?
- 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.
- 1 ¶ And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.
- 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,
- 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.
- 4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying,
- 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:
- 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.
- 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.
- 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.
- 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.
- 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.
- 11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.
- 12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:
- 13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;
- 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.
- 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.
- 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.
- 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?
- 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

--Acts 10.1-8, 10.19-11.18

Many issue could be raised from the contents of this passage. Historically, this passage has been a "battleground passage" for the paedobaptism debate. And this passage is important in this regard. Paedobaptism is a severe evil and leads to all sorts of unbiblical practices and thoughts. However, this is not my concern at this time.

At issue with the baptism of Cornelius is *the state or spiritual condition* of this centurion *prior to* his baptism. Upon hearing me make this statement, many within both the Evangelical and Reformed movements would think that there is no issue at all. "Cornelius was not a believer. That is why Peter went to him. Why would have Peter gone to Cornelius if he were a believer? And does not the scripture say that Peter would speak to him words through which he would be saved (cf. Acts 11.14)? No, Cornelius was not a believer prior to Peter coming."

This is the common sentiment concerning this passage, even among Reformed men. However, contrary to popular thought, it is my conviction that Cornelius was a servant of God *prior to* the coming of Peter and his baptism. My reasons are as follows:

*A. The testimony of Luke concerning Cornelius.*

It is the biblical testimony that Cornelius was a pleasing servant of God prior to the coming of Peter. Note especially v. 2 in this connection:

- 2 A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

This verse states that Cornelius was pleasing in the sight of God. Luke, as moved by the Holy Spirit, describes Cornelius as a *godly* man.

*1. He was a devout man*

First, v. 2 Luke states that Cornelius was a devout man. The Greek word here used to describe Cornelius is the word *eusebes*, that can be translated as either godly or devout. This word is not used often in the New Testament, but when it is, it refers to one that was a godly, devout individual:

- 12 And one Ananias, a **devout** man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,  
--Acts 22.12
- 9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the **godly** out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:  
--II Pet. 2.9

The adverbial form of the word indicates a similar usage:

- 12 Yea, and all that will live **godly** in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.  
--II Tim. 3.12
- 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and **godly**, in this present world;  
--Titus 2.12

Thus, Luke here would seem to be indicating that Cornelius, in his life and service to God prior to the coming of Peter, was a devout man as regards the word of God.

## *2. He was a God-fearing man*

Here we find Luke stating that Cornelius was one who feared the LORD. Luke states here that Cornelius was one who was *fearing God*. This phrase comes from the Old Testament usage of one who feared the LORD. Psalm 135 states the following:

19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:

20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.

21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

--Ps. 135.19-21

In the book of Proverbs, the one who feared the LORD was the one who had biblical understanding and wisdom. Thus, here, in Acts 10, Luke uses this very familiar term to describe to his readers just what type of person Cornelius was. Those who read this phrase would have no problem in understanding that Cornelius was a godly man, one that feared the LORD.

## *3. He was one that loved his neighbours*

Here we find description of Cornelius as it relates to his fellow man: *which gave much alms to the people,...* Here we find that Cornelius was one who had a concern for his fellow man. Although we do have record of the Pharisees also giving to the poor, we do not have testimony that they were godly and those who feared the LORD, as we do with Cornelius. Thus, this statement here concerning his charity coupled with the previous statements seems to be a strong statement that Cornelius was one that lived the full table of the Law. He was one that loved God and loved his neighbour. And here we have Luke testifying that his deeds were true works of mercy.

## *4. He was a man of prayer*

Lastly, Luke states that Cornelius was one that was a man of prayer. Again, many men in that day and age were those who prayed. Men were very religious in that day, praying to many different gods and idols. But here we find Luke stating that Cornelius was one that prayed to God, the God of the Old Testament, the God of the Jewish people, the God of the Holy Scriptures. Cornelius was one that prayed to the same God as did Moses, Aaron and Samuel. And the list could go on.

## *5. Summary*

In sum, then, we have a fairly complete picture of the spiritual condition of Cornelius--that he was a devout gentile. In fact, with the testimony here given, we would have a good example of what it means to be a follower of God, of what it would mean to live according to the two tables of the Law: loving God and loving your neighbour.

## *B. the angelic testimony concerning Cornelius*

Added to the inspired testimony of Luke we have the angelic testimony of the angel with whom Cornelius spoke. Note his testimony in v. 4:

- 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

This is a telling declaration. The angel states that both the prayers and the service of Cornelius have ascended up before God as a memorial, clearly a reference to the pleasing nature of these items. We know elsewhere from scripture that without faith, it is impossible to please God. So, for Cornelius to have his prayers and service ascend before God as a memorial, to be pleasing to God, he clearly was a man of faith. Thus, he was a servant of God, one who had faith in God, when Peter came.

Further, we are instructed in Proverbs concerning the nature of the prayer of the ungodly:

- 9 ¶ He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination.  
--Prov. 28.9

A similar sentiment can be found in Proverbs 15.8, 15.29 and 21.27. But here, we find in Acts 10, a statement from an angel that the prayer of Cornelius was *not* an abomination. No, but rather it was a memorial, something that was pleasing to God. Thus, it would seem that Cornelius was a worshiper of God prior to the coming of Peter unto him.

### C. The Testimony of Peter

The third testimony we have in Acts 10 is that of the apostle Peter himself. Note in v. 35 how he describes Cornelius:

- 34 ¶ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:  
35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.  
--Acts 10.34-35

Note what Peter says about Cornelius: that he was one who feared God and worked righteousness. This is Peter's description of this man. From the testimony of others Peter learned that Cornelius was one who feared God. And that Cornelius also was one that worked righteousness. Now, from a first century perspective, what was the standard of righteousness that was known to Peter? The word of God, even the law found in the 10 commandments. Now it would be utterly amazing if Peter were ascribing to Cornelius some other standard of righteousness than that which he knew--the word of God. Further, it would be even more astonishing if Peter were making such statements when all the while he knew that Cornelius were not a servant of God, the same God that he himself served. No, Peter, in making these statements reveals to us his understanding of the spiritual nature of Cornelius.

### D. The doctrine of the depravity of man.

Lastly, we need to approach the question of the spiritual state of Cornelius from a theological standpoint. We, as reformed men and women, hold to the scriptural teaching that man, apart from the grace and working of God, is dead in his sin. As such he is unable to do any spiritual good in the sight of God.

Yet, here we are faced with one that some say is an unbeliever, that some state there is no spiritual life within this man, within Cornelius. Yet, as we have seen, the prayers and service of this man have ascended as a memorial before God.

The doctrine of the depravity of man rules out the possibility that Cornelius was an unbeliever at the time when Peter came. We have beheld the spiritual testimony of three witnesses: Luke, the angel, and Peter. None of these portray Cornelius as one who was sinful in the sight of God, or as one who was living in sin. No, Cornelius was one that was an example of godliness, not one whose prayers were an abomination unto the LORD.

No, Cornelius was a pleasing servant of the LORD.

#### *E. The Acts 11 passage*

Some may wish to stop me and point out the testimony of Peter in Acts 11, when Peter was recounting the events concerning the baptism of Cornelius and his household. Does not Peter state that Cornelius was told:

- 13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him,  
Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;
- 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

--Acts 11.13-14

"Were they not told words whereby they would be saved? Thus, they cannot have been saved, no matter what other arguments can be brought forth." And for some, this is the end of the matter. However, to take this position is to come dangerously close to promulgating an Arminian view of salvation and of the service of Cornelius.

I know of no place in the word of God where one is said to be a fearer of God when he was not a servant of God. I know of no place where the prayers and service of a sinner, of one that does not know the LORD are said to be pleasing to God as a memorial. From the testimony of Luke, the angel and of Peter himself, Cornelius was a servant and a worshiper of the God of the Bible. Period.

#### *1. "What God has cleansed..."*

"But what of Acts 11?" At issue is not the conversion of Cornelius and his family. No, the issue is the admission of the gentiles into the assembly of the people of God. What troubled the Jews so was seeing all men as equal in the sight of God. For generations it was sin for Peter to go and eat and commune with the gentiles (cf. the vision that Peter had). And this is why the Spirit being given to these gentiles was so serious--it meant that they, the gentiles, had equal standing in this new work of God. Note Peter's words in v. 17:

- 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.
- 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?
- 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then

hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

--Acts 11.16-18

God, in His pouring out the Spirit on these gentiles, declared, once and for all, that there were now no distinctions between those of Israel, and those without. He had declared all things pure (cf. Acts 11.9), even the gentiles. And in being given the gift of the Spirit, the LORD publicly testified that the gentiles were now part of this new work.

## 2. *The identity of the Saviour*

The second item I wish to mention is that Peter, in his coming to the home of Cornelius, brought to them further information concerning their Saviour. Peter, in coming to them, brought them words, words which did two things:

a. *first, these words revealed the identity of their Saviour.* For the lack of better terms, I would liken Cornelius and his family as "Old Testament" believers. For them, their hope was a coming hope. With the coming of Peter to them, Peter identified for them the Messiah of God and revealed that this Christ was the promised Messiah. Thus, Peter revealed the identity of the Saviour to them. A similar situation is found with Apollos in Acts 18, where Aquilia and Priscilla bring Apollos further into the truth. They were and had been believers. But now, they had been brought into *further* truth.

b. *And second, these words revealed to them the certainty of their salvation in this Saviour.* Cornelius was told that it was through these words they would be saved. Not that they could be saved or might be saved. No, but that they would be saved. It was a certainty. They were saved in this man, Christ. And now they knew who the Messiah was and how He made satisfaction for sin. And their salvation was certain in *this Man, even Christ.*

And with the giving of the Spirit, Peter knew that these before him were disciples, even as they were (cf. Acts 11. 17). Thus, Peter commanded that these be baptised.

And this is the significance of the baptism of Cornelius--it demonstrates the unity and the brotherhood that are in Christ. Just as Peter said--the one that fears God is welcome by Him. And now, this was true of all people--Jew, Samaritan and now gentile. All were now part of this new covenant community. And the outpouring of the Holy Spirit proved this to all that came with Peter to the house of Cornelius. The baptism of these gentiles was nothing more than the visible adding of gentiles to the covenant community. They were already servants of God. They now already possessed the Holy Spirit. Now, how could anyone deny that they be baptised, in that God had publicly declared and demonstrated that they were already part of His people?

This, then, is the baptism of Cornelius and its significance for us.



### **III. Observations**

#### 1. The life of Cornelius prior to the coming of Peter is worthy of imitation

Note the scriptural testimony. Nowhere is the character of Cornelius maligned. He is held up as an example of the godliness that may be found within the gentile community. In fact, this fact is even more amazing when one takes into account his profession. The centurions of that day were not typically known for their piety. No, Cornelius was an exception to his profession.

#### 2. The common understanding is not always the biblical understanding.

Many today ascribe unbelief to Cornelius. Many today see him as a lost sinner. But as we have seen, to hold this view is to be at odds with the testimony of Luke, of the angel and of the apostle Peter. No, the common understanding of the scriptures is not always the correct understanding.

## **The Baptism of the Philippian Jailer**

### **I. Review/Introduction**

For several weeks, we have been examining the history of the doctrine of baptism. In the last several weeks, we have been looking at the baptisms recorded in the book of Acts, gleaning from them a better understanding of the baptism of the early church and its relationship to the baptism of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus and His disciples.

Last week, I had mentioned that I wanted to examine two of the instances of baptism recorded in the book of Acts for a more careful consideration, in that there has been great confusion and error related to the understanding of what exactly took place. And last week, we began looking at the first of these passages--that of the baptism of Cornelius and his household (cf Acts 10). As I stated at the outset, the issue with the baptism of Cornelius is not related to the practice of baptism but rather the significance attached to it because of the spiritual state of Cornelius. It was (and is) my contention that Cornelius was a servant of the Most High God prior to the coming of Peter and the other Jewish believers. This seems to be the uniform testimony of the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts:

- this is the testimony of Luke (cf. v. 2),
- this is the testimony of the angel (cf. v. 4), and
- this is the testimony of the apostle Peter (cf. v. 34-35)

Each of these witnesses saw that Cornelius was righteous and faithful as regards the law and was obedient to the witness of the word of God prior to the coming of Peter. This understanding also is in harmony with the biblical doctrine of the depravity of man, that prior to the working of God within the life of an individual, it is impossible for one to be pleasing to God. Thus, for Cornelius to have his service be a memorial before God, there had to have been a prior working of God within the life of Cornelius.

As we mentioned last week, *the significance of the baptism of Cornelius is that it demonstrates the unity and the brotherhood that are in Christ*. Just as Peter said--the one that fears God is welcome by Him. This was not an issue of conversion, but of inclusion--inclusion of the gentiles into the work and people of God. All were now part of this new covenant community, whether Jew, Samaritan and now gentile.

As we noted last week, it was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that proved this to all that came with Peter to the house of Cornelius. The baptism of these gentiles was nothing more than the visible adding of gentiles to the covenant community. They were already servants of God. They now already possessed the Holy Spirit. Now, how could anyone deny that they be baptised, in that God had publicly declared and demonstrated that they were already part of His people?

This, then, is the baptism of Cornelius and its significance for us.

## II. The Baptism of the Philippian Jailer

This evening, I would like to examine the other incidence of baptism that has been misunderstood--the case of the baptism of the Philippian jailer. And as it was with the baptism of Cornelius, the issue is not one that is directly related to the doctrine of baptism, but rather with the events preceding this baptism. But that we have a biblical understanding of the baptism, we need to have a biblical understanding of the whole situation surrounding this baptism. Thus, we shall proceed.

In Acts 16, we find the Philippian jailer asking the question, "What must I do to be saved?" to Paul and Silas. Please turn to this most important passage.

### A. The text

Acts 16.25-34:

- 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.
- 23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:
- 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.
- 25 ¶ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.
- 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.
- 27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.
- 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.
- 29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,
- 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
- 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.
- 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.
- 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptised, he and all his, straightway.
- 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

### B. Background and Context

In this passage, we find Paul and Silas preaching Christ to the Philippian jailer. That we may better understand what transpired in this encounter, I would like to examine this passage in more depth.

In ch 16 of Acts, we find Paul and Silas having come to Europe in response to a vision; Paul previously having been forbidden from speaking the word of the Lord in Asia. In the first part of this chapter, we find Paul speaking to Lydia regarding the Lord and we see the Lord "opening her heart" to this message.

In vv. 16ff we find a most peculiar situation: Paul being followed by a demon-possessed woman who

was declaring that he and Silas were servants of the most High God and that they were declaring the way of salvation. Rightly did Paul realise that this testimony was demonic, and he acted accordingly, casting the demon out of the young lady.

As a result of this act, Paul and Silas were promptly beaten and cast into prison. And this is where we find Paul in our passage under question.

While in prison, we find both Paul and Silas enduring rather well. Even though they had just been stripped and beaten, we find them in v. 25 singing praise (in the Psalms) unto God, with the prisoners listening.

During their praise, there is a great earthquake, so great that the foundations of the jail are shaken. And with this shaking, the doors to all the cells are cast open. The jailer, being awakened by this earthquake, comes in and sees all the cell doors open. In so seeing, he assumes that the prisoners are gone. So now, he draws his sword so as to strike himself down.

Paul, seeing what the jailer is about to do, calls in a loud voice to stop him. Immediately, the jailer comes rushing in and falls before Paul and Silas. And thus, we are confronted with the jailer's question.

### C. The Jailer's Question/Paul's Answer

In v. 30, we find a very famous question, and it is assumed that Paul gives answer to this question in v. 31, when He says: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*. But it is my contention that Paul *did not* answer the question put forth to him. No, Paul did not tell him *what to do* to be saved; he told him *how* a person is saved. And there is a huge difference between the two. My reasons are as follows:

First, the emphasis of the jailer's question. To understand Paul's words one must first understand the jailer's words. In v. 30, the jailer falls before Paul and Silas and asks "What must I do to be saved?" Yet these words need careful exposition. In these words we find an interesting construction, that, in the Greek, the jailer uses the small Greek infinitive *dei* in his question. Typically this word denotes *necessity*. The Bauer-Arndt-Gingerich-Danker Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament notes the basic meaning of the word as follows: *it is necessary, one must or has to*. Literally, the words of the jailer, then, could be translated as follows:

"Lords, what needs be done (by) me in order that I be saved?"

or

Lords, what is necessary (for) me to do in order that I be saved?

or

Lords, what needs me to do in order to be saved?

Literally, this one was asking how he could merit salvation. That is, what was it *he could do* to be saved. With this understanding of the question, I therefore reiterate that Paul did not answer the jailer's question, when he and Silas spoke in v. 31. Nowhere in the preaching or the writings of Paul do we see him advocating what a person *must do* to be saved. Thus, the words of Paul in v. 31 must be understood in some other manner.

Second, the biblical understanding of faith. It was the apostolic witness that belief was no work:

--Jn. 6.29 This was our Lord's own understanding of belief. Note His words to the Pharisees in Jn. 6:

28 ¶ Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Those asking Christ this question ask what they can do to do the works of God. And Christ does not answer the question which they asked. He tells them concerning the true work of God. Faith, according to our Lord was a work (literally--*the* work) of God. Herman Hoeksema, a Protestant Reformed pastor and theologian of the last century, in his Reformed Dogmatics, states the following regarding the nature of this faith:

*...(the scriptures teach) us that the real work of God is that we believe in Jesus Christ Whom God has sent. And...we must maintain that faith is God's own work, the work of His free grace within us..*<sup>1</sup>

Faith is the work of God, not man, as our Lord so testifies.

--*Acts 18.27* In Acts 18.27, we have the account of Luke regarding the spread of the gospel into Achaia. Luke writes:

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

Luke notes here that they were those that believed through grace. That is, that it was as a result of the work of the grace of God that they believed. Belief was a result of grace, not the result of something that they did.

--*Rom. 4* In the book of Romans we find Paul explaining the foundation of the gospel to the Romans. In ch 1-3 we find him laying the foundation that all are sinners before God, both Jews and Gentiles. In Rom.4 we find Paul now expositing the true nature of salvation, for both Jews and Gentiles, is through faith. In vv. 1-5 Paul states the following:

- 1 ¶ What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
- 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.
- 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
- 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
- 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Paul understood that one was justified (or saved) through faith and not through something that one did. Note also this emphasis in Rom. 9.16:

16 So then (the favour of God) *is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

It does not matter what a person wants or does. The merciful salvation of God comes sovereignly to those on whom He has designed to have mercy.

--*Phil 1.29* In Philippians 1.29 we find the following words of Paul:

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

In these words we find the testimony of Paul that belief is something that is *granted*. In the Greek, the word used here has the idea of something that is *gladly* given. Thus, Paul saw that belief was a gift, that was *gladly* given.

--*I Jn 5*In I Jn. 5 we find John's understanding of belief:

- 1 ¶ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.
- 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Hoeksema. Reformed Dogmatics. Reformed Free Publ. Assn. 1966. p. 485.

- 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.
- 4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.
- 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

In these verses, John expresses the fact that belief is something that comes from God, something that the one that is born from God has. In fact, in v. 1, a literal translation of John's words states that the one believing is one that "is having been born" from God. John uses the Greek perfect tense to describe the working of God in such an individual. The spiritual birth, the divine working of God, takes place, with belief being an outflow of this divine birth. Belief is not a work of man, but a result of the divine working of God in the life of a man.

And this biblical understanding of the nature of faith was the understanding which Paul had regarding the nature of true, saving faith. *Paul never saw belief as something that one **did** as is commonly held today. Paul saw that belief was a gift from grace (Eph 2.8) and that it was something that was **in opposition to** works and human effort (that is, something that one would *do* [Rom. 4.1ff; 9.16]). Faith/Belief is not something that one *does*, it is a state in which one finds himself. Note Heb. 11.1:*

11 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Belief is not a matter of doing, but of persuasion, and of conviction (cf. also Acts 17.3-4, where those that believed are described as those that were persuaded). Thus, Paul would never have told the jailer what *to do* to be saved, but he did tell him *how* a person is saved (ie--justified): a person is justified through faith in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what Paul and Silas explain to the jailer. Note v. 32:

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

Paul and Silas spoke the word concerning the Lord to the jailer and those that were in his house.

Further, we find that those to whom Paul and Silas spoke did believe as evidenced by their being baptised. Clearly, God had opened their hearts, just as He had done to Lydia and her household, in the first part of ch. 16. Salvation is of God, from first to last. *God* is the one who saves.

So, what is the answer to the question of the jailer? What must a person do to be saved? The biblical witness is that he does nothing to be saved. One can do nothing to be saved. But the person who believes and does not work, that one will be saved (cf. Rom. 4.5).

Upon their confession, we find the Philippian jailer and his family being baptised in that same hour. These were also baptised. Those who were saved by grace, by the working of God, unto His glory, as manifested by their profession, were baptised. And those baptised rejoiced greatly and praised God (cf. v. 36).

### III. Observations

#### 1. Salvation is wholly of grace

If this passage teaches anything, it is that salvation, the process of God saving man, is wholly and entirely of grace, and is entirely a work from God. God planned and ordained this salvation. God provided a real, substitutionary sacrifice for this salvation. God most efficaciously works this salvation in all those given to the Son (cf.--Jn. 6.37-40). God keeps such ones safe and most assuredly will bring all those safe to the culmination of their salvation. *Salvation is wholly of God.*

#### 2. The one turning belief into a work is not preaching the biblical gospel

From the verses that we have examined it is clear that belief was never construed by the biblical

writers as something that must be "done". As mentioned above, this was not the view of Luke, of John, of Paul or even of our Lord. Thus, the one who teaches otherwise is teaching something that the Bible does not teach. The one so doing, turning belief into something that one must do in order to be saved, is preaching a type of belief that is foreign to the apostles and even our Lord Himself. The spiritual birth, the divine working of God, takes place, with belief being an outflow of this divine birth. Belief is not a work of man, but a result of the divine working of God in the life of a man (cf. I Jn. 5.1ff), *not* something that one "does".

### 3. One is saved (that is--justified) through faith, **not** doing

My next observation is this. Paul did not tell the jailer what to do to be saved. But he did tell him how God saves--through faith. And this is the truth today: the one believing in Christ and His substitutionary, atoning work has been saved and will be saved from his sins. Behold the testimony of Peter in Acts 4:

- 10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.
- 11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.
- 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: **for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.**

### 4. Baptism is not just a rite of the mature

If there were ever a case for the argument that a new convert ought to be baptised, it is here. Here we find the Philippian jailer and his family having just preached the gospel within the "last hour". And yet, Paul and Silas have no reservations in baptising those who knew virtually nothing of the God that they now profess. And they were baptised by Paul and Silas. New believers ought to be baptised. And the baptism of the Philippian jailer is proof of this fact.

## Baptism and Schism

### I. Introduction

For the past several months we have been examining the doctrine of baptism from an historical viewpoint, examining the history of the practice. We have examined the baptism of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus by John, the baptism of Jesus and his disciples, and the baptism of the early church. In examining the baptism of the early church we examined primarily the history of recorded baptisms that were found in the book of Acts. In two separate lessons we examined two specific instances of baptism, and how the common understanding of these events was lacking as regards certain issues.

In preparing for the next major section of this study (eg--the theological meaning/significance of baptism) I discovered that there were two more passages, both from the epistle of I Corinthians, that we needed to examine as they relate to the history of baptism. In one sense, I could have placed these passages into our study on the meaning of baptism, in that we find Paul teaching the church of Corinth regarding this issue. But more accurately, they are passages in which the issue at hand is not one of baptism, but of another issue. Baptism in these passages is taken as established fact. Thus, I felt it would be better to examine baptism in this segment of our study.

The first passage we will examine is found in the opening remarks of the epistle. So please turn with me to chapter of I Corinthians.

### II. Schism within the church and the role of baptism

I would like to begin by reading vv. 10-17 of chapter 1:

- 10 ¶ Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.
- 11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house of Chloe*, that there are contentions among you.
- 12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.
- 13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?
- 14 ¶ I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;
- 15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.
- 16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.
- 17 ¶ For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.
- 18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

--I Cor. 1.10-18



### *The Background of the Passage*

Here we find Paul recounting a situation that seems to have developed out of the historical development of the church of Corinth. Please turn with me to Acts 18. In Acts 18 we find Paul arriving in Corinth, where he begins to minister alone (vv. 1,4). Soon Silas and Timothy arrive (v. 5) and Paul begins ministering full time in the city. After experiencing opposition within the synagogue (v. 6) he removed from there and went to the house of Justus, that was next to the synagogue and continues to preach there. In v. 8, we find that Crispus, one of the leaders of the synagogue believed and was baptised, along with his whole household (v. 8). In v. 9, Paul receives a vision from Christ that none will harm him and that He has "many people in this city". So, Paul then spends the next 18 months ministering in the city of Corinth (v. 11). After another wave of opposition (vv. 12-17) Paul takes his leave of Corinth (v. 18). Along with him go Priscilla and Aquila, two disciples with whom Paul worked in Corinth (cf. v. 2). Priscilla and Aquila depart from Paul in Ephesus and Paul continues on his journey.

Soon, thereafter, a man named Apollos arrives in Ephesus. He was an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures (v. 24), who taught accurately the things of the Lord. But he was only acquainted with the baptism of John, that is, he was preaching that which John preached concerning the Christ. Thus, it would seem that Apollos did not know of the latter events of the life of Christ (in that John was murdered somewhere in the middle of the ministry of Christ). So after hearing him preach, Priscilla and Aquila take Apollos aside and teach him the way of God more accurately. After this, we find Apollos going to Greece, where he too arrives in Corinth (v. 19.1) and continues to minister to the Corinthians.

This is the context in which our passage in Corinth was written.

### *The Passage Itself*

In returning to our passage, we find in v. 10 Paul beseeching the Corinthians to "speak the same" and to be of the "same mind" and of the "same judgment". Why? We find here that there were schisms or divisions apparently forming within the church.

In v. 11, we find the report that had come to Paul concerning the situation there in the Corinthian church--that there were contentions among the brethren. In v. 12, we find how these divisions were being expressed:

*every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.*

Apparently, the divisions were not along doctrinal lines, but rather were along the lines of personality. Note again how the division were noted: "I am of Paul; ...of Apollos; ...of Cephas; and I of Christ". As a side, here we find possibly the first scriptural reference to that which could be identified as denominational lines.

In v. 13, we find Paul's response to such divisions within the body of Christ: *Is Christ divided?* Paul understood rightly the effects of schisms and divisions within the body of Christ. As we find later in this epistle, the church is the body of Christ (cf. chapter 12). And if these schisms would have proceeded along the lines that they had started, by starting different assemblies following different ministers of the gospel, they would be doing exactly

that--dividing the body of Christ. So thus, Paul states, "is Christ divided?". Paul continues to show the utter folly of such thinking: *was Paul crucified for you?* Here we see the folly of following such reasoning. It was Christ that made the difference, that was crucified for each member of that church. Why then state, as was being said, that one was of Paul? What had Paul done for them that Christ did not? This was utter folly. And thus, Paul states as much.

He continues by stating: *were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* The rhetorical answer to this question is: *of course not!!* No, they were all baptised into the name of Christ. They were followers of Christ. They showed that they were followers in their baptism--into His name, and not into the name of Paul. Paul was not the one who was crucified for them; Christ was. So why ought there be divisions?

In v. 14 we find Paul making a rather interesting statement: *I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;...* Paul here expresses thanks to God that he did *not* baptise. Paul, in all his months of ministry in the city of Corinth, apparently did not frequently engage in the act of baptism. He could not have, in order to be able to make such a statement.

In v. 15, we find what it was for which Paul was thankful--that no one could say that Paul had baptised them into his name. No one could have any basis for causing a division based upon the work of Paul--and for this Paul was thankful to God. He was thankful that his actions (in this case, baptism) could not be used as a cause for division within the body of Christ.

In v. 16, Paul states that there may have been a few other people that he did baptise--Stephanus and his household. Beyond this, he did not know if he did baptise any others or not. Clearly, Paul had not baptised many within this congregation. It would seem that Paul was following the example of our Lord, who had his disciples baptise those that came for baptism (cf. Jn. 4.1ff).

In v. 17, we find Paul further expounding upon his statement concerning baptism that he had made in v. 14. Paul was not concerned whether he himself had baptised any because Christ had not send him to baptise. He was sent to evangelise: *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel:...* Here we find the proper perspective concerning baptism expressed by Paul. Paul rightly understood the great commission. In Matt 28.18-20, Christ gave the great commission to his disciples:

- 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
- 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
- 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

--Mt 28.18-20

Here we find the proper relation of baptism to evangelism. The goal of evangelism is not to baptise, or to get one on the church role. No, the goal of evangelism was to make disciples. Yes, baptism was part of that process. But it was not the end of that process. Neither was it an end within itself, as it is often practiced today. No, baptism is not an end within itself, and has no value in and of itself. But within the greater context of the disciple-making process baptism had a very important place.

Before we leave this discussion concerning Paul's understanding of his own baptising, we

need to discuss one more item--that of the importance of baptism. Some have found here within the words of Paul a justification for *not* baptising. "Well, Paul did say that he was thankful that he did not baptise, so clearly, baptism was not important in the mind of Paul." We need to be very careful here as to which words we emphasise. We also need to understand Paul's words within the context of the divisions that were beginning to form within the church of Corinth. In the Greek, Paul states that he was thankful that he had baptised virtually not one of them. And why was he thankful? Paul was thankful in this instance because then no one could use him as a justification for dividing the church (cf. v. 15).

But another may add, "But does not Paul state that he was not sent to baptise? So thus, baptism must not have been very important." Yes, Paul does make that statement. But again we need to understand Paul's words within the context of the divisions that were beginning to form. As we have already seen, Paul understood the proper relation between baptism and evangelism. Baptism was not the issue, Christ was. And this is what he states in 17 and 18. He was to preach Christ. Yes part of this preaching Christ would involve baptism (cf. Mt 28.18ff), but his commission was to make disciples, not just to baptise them. So to say, as some do from this passage, that baptism is not important, is to fail to understand the great commission itself and to fail to recognise the importance of the place of baptism within the greater issues related to the great commission.

These, then, are the verses before us this evening.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. One's baptism is not an issue that ought divide the brethren

Please note this from the context. There were those within the church of Corinth that were beginning to create some manner of division within the church. Clearly both Paul and Apollos had ministered within this body. And we know that disciples were baptised under their ministries. But as we saw in v. 15, Paul did not wish that his baptising would be the source of division within the body of Christ. Who baptises us is not the important issue. One's baptism is not to cause division.

#### 2. Brethren are not to separate from brethren; brethren are to separate from apostasy

One clear observation that we have here is that brethren are not to separate from other brethren. It is clear that from this passage, to do so would be to divide Christ, that is, His body. Cf. v. 13.

Yet this is not the whole issue. Elsewhere in scripture we are admonished to be separate from those that walk in an unruly manner and from those that do not hold to the doctrine of the Christ. Yes, there may be divisions. But we ought to make sure that the division is a biblical one.

## **Baptism for the Dead**

### **I. Introduction**

This evening we will examine one of the most difficult passages in the whole of the scriptures. It is difficult as it relates to baptism. But even more so, it is difficult as it relates to the scriptures as a whole. The passage is found in I Corinthians 15:29.

This is the last passage that we will examine regarding the historical manifestation of baptism. For the past several months we have been examining the doctrine of baptism from an historical viewpoint, examining the history of the practice. We have examined the baptism of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus by John, the baptism of Jesus and his disciples, and the baptism of the early church.

After this evening, God-willing, we will begin to examine the theological significance and meaning of the practice of baptism. In this section, I hope to examine each of the theological teachings concerning baptism that are found in the pages of the epistles of the New Testament. And again, God-willing, we will be examining the teaching of Paul found in Romans 6 next Lord's day. After this next section, I hope to conclude this study with a brief examination of the mode of baptism, that is, how exactly baptism is administered.

Before we begin, I would like to briefly review our study of last week. In chapter one of I Corinthians we found Paul commenting on the schisms that were beginning to develop within the church at Corinth. We noted how those schisms were identified (by personalities) and how those so dividing seemed to be using baptism to justify their separation.

We also noted how Paul addressed the issue of baptism and these schisms: "...for Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the gospel", says Paul. We concluded with a brief examination of a defence of the practice of baptism over and against a misunderstanding that has arisen from these very words of Paul. Paul, in so saying, was not dismissing the practice of baptism, nor was he advocating the abandonment of the practice. Paul knew and followed the Great Commission and understood the place of baptism in that commission.

Thus, we can see from this last lesson that the Corinthians were thoroughly acquainted with the practice of baptism and understood the significance of the practice. This is important to understand as we begin to address our passage this evening found in I Cor. 15.

### **II. Schism within the church and the role of baptism**

Please turn with me to the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of the epistle of I Corinthians. We will be reading vv. 29-34 of chapter 15:

- 29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?
- 30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?
- 31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.
- 32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if

- the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.  
33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.  
34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.

--I Cor. 15.29-34

As we stated before in our introduction, here, in I Cor. 15, we find one of the most difficult passages to understand in the whole of the scriptures. As we have noted in previous lessons, where biblical difficulties have arisen, there can be several reasons for the difficulties. A passage can be difficult due to a corrupted text/passage. There may be a variant reading that makes the passage difficult to understand. There can be theological difficulties as well.

Other times, we may be faced with a term that is used rarely in the scriptures and discerning the exact meaning may be difficult. Still other times, the passage may have two or more reasonable alternative meanings, and the difficulty is in knowing which meaning the author had in mind when he penned the words. And in some cases, we may find that the words before us are perfectly clear, yet they seem to make no sense in what they say. This may be the most vexing of all difficulties. And that is what we find here in I Cor. 15.

As we have just read, the passage seems to be rather self explanatory. No obscure meanings or lexical problems. No glaring grammatical issues. The words are easily understood:

- 29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

### *The context of the verse*

Here, in v. 29 we find a statement in the passage regarding baptism. To fully understand the import of that which Paul speaks, one must needs understand the overall greater context. After mentioning the gospel in vv. 1-11, Paul begins to discuss the resurrection in the remainder of the chapter. Apparently, from v. 12, some within the congregation were claiming that there was no resurrection from the dead. Against such heresy Paul now speaks. In vv. 12-19, Paul speaks to the issue if there were no resurrection. Christians live as we do in the hope of the resurrection. And if there is no resurrection, then all is vain--faith, godly living, everything. And the ones so teaching that Christ is raised, if he has not been, are to be most pitied (v. 19).

But now, Christ has been raised (v. 20). And just as death came through Adam, so now comes life through Christ, who has risen from the dead (v. 22). Further, in that Christ has been raised, death now has been done away with (v. 26). Now, through Christ, all shall be subjected to the Father (v. 28).

This, then, is the context in which we find this verse, a context of the resurrection and a defence of the doctrine of the resurrection.

And now, v. 29. Although much could be said as to the meaning of this verse, grammatically and contextually, whatever meaning that is given to this verse, it must fit within the framework that Paul has crafted concerning the resurrection.

### *The verse itself*

In examining v. 29, we need to be very careful in our understanding. Commentators have been varied in their interpretations of this verse. Many see in this verse a mention of the practice within the fringes of the early church of members being baptised for their dead relatives and friends. Apparently this was a practice within some of the Gnostic movements and pagan religions of the day. This can also be known as a vicarious baptism. One of the reasons that this understanding has been questioned, however, is the seeming silence of Paul in condemning this practice, if it does refer to a pagan/cultic practice. Rarely does Paul mention theological error without some comment upon the nature of the error and/or its dangers. But here we have Paul being silent to this practice.

As a side, it is my understanding that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) still do practice some form of a vicarious baptism ritual, although I am not up on the beliefs and tenants of the Mormon Church.

Others, see in this verse a mention of the supposed practice of baptising over the graves of the dead. Charles Hodge, in his commentaries on I and II Corinthians mentions this practice.<sup>2</sup> Still, Leon Morris mentions the idea that some have held that this baptism refers to a baptism that was for the dead, that is, was in or through their blood because they were martyred before being able to be baptised.<sup>3</sup> There are also a host of other lesser known interpretations. One has said that in all he found over 40 different ideas of what this verse means.

What, then, are we to think regarding these issues? As to the first interpretation, it would seem clear that this idea of being baptised for dead individuals seems to rest upon baptism having some power *in and of itself*, a power that nowhere else is mentioned in scripture. Thus, this view would seem to be discredited from the start.

As to the other views, none really seem to address the issues of the verse with any more clarity. Maybe Gordon Clark was right when he stated the following as regards this verse:

It may not be absolutely necessary to acknowledge here that commentators are less than omniscient, but it is certainly appropriate. Meyer has five full pages of fine print on this verse, most of which can be summarised in a conclusion that no one has any idea of what the verse means. The Mormons can quote it with glee, but nobody else can.<sup>4</sup>

That being said, the only other comment that I would like to make at this point, is more of a possible solution, rather than a dogmatic statement. As we noted, this verse is found within the context of the resurrection; literally it is sandwiched by the concept. So, it only seems to make sense to look for some idea or interpretation that includes the resurrection. From elsewhere in the scriptures, we see that baptism is linked with the understanding of the resurrection. Note Rom. 6.1ff and I Pet 3. Both of these passages seem to indicate that the one so being baptised was being baptised and identified with the One that was raised from the dead, that is, Christ. So, it is possible that when Paul uses the phrase baptism for the dead, that he is merely referring to the practice of being baptised for the sake of Christ. And this would explain as to why there is no condemnation from Paul as regards the practice, because Paul is simply referring to Christian baptism.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Hodge. I & II Corinthians. Banner of Truth. 1988. p. 338

<sup>3</sup> Leon Morris. 1 Corinthians. InterVarsity Press/Eerdmans. 1983. pp. 218-219.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon H. Clark. *First Corinthians*. Trinity Foundation. 1975. p. 289

I realise that this understanding may also have problems, but I think that this does answer many of the harder questions.

However, maybe Clark was right when he observed the following:

This, then, is another instance of Paul's omitting something that we would like to know.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, we do need to focus upon the argument at hand--that of the resurrection of the dead. Without the resurrection, we are of all men most to be pitied (cf. v. 19). Without the resurrection, then we might as well live like the world, as Paul states in v. 32:

32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

And baptism is our declaration that our hope is the resurrection, the resurrection of Christ and our resurrection as well.

This, then, is the verse before us.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. Not all things in the scripture are equally understandable.

Cf. II Pet 3.18

#### 2. Behold how baptism can be abused

If this verse does refer to a practice of baptising people for the dead, then we can surely see how such a simple practice can be so easily abused and misunderstood, even within the times of the apostles. This could also be said regarding our last lesson, the divisions that may have occurred as a result of one's baptism (or of one's baptiser).

#### 3. Behold the connection between baptism and the resurrection

We will see this connection even more clearly when we study the meaning of baptism. Contextually, whatever the meaning of "baptism for the dead", it is clear that, in the mind of Paul, there was a link or a relationship between baptism and resurrection. And even now we can see that any proper understanding of baptism is related to the resurrection.

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<sup>5</sup> Gordon H. Clark. *First Corinthians*. Trinity Foundation. 1975. p. 290

## **Baptism and Unity with Christ: Part I**

### **Background of the Passage**

#### **I. Introduction**

As you are well aware, we have been examining the doctrine of baptism, examining the historical manifestation of the doctrine in the pages of scripture. For the next several weeks we will examine, God-willing, the theological teachings of the scriptures concerning the meaning and significance of baptism.

In this section, I hope to examine each of the theological teachings concerning baptism that are found in the pages of the epistles of the New Testament. This evening, we will begin by examining the teaching of Paul found in Romans 6. In the following weeks, we will examine the following passages: Galatians 3.27; Eph. 4.5; Colossians 2.12; and I Pet 3.21. After this section, I hope to conclude this study with a brief examination of the mode of baptism, that is, how exactly baptism is administered.

Before we begin, I would like to make a brief statement concerning the meaning of baptism. It is largely this subject, the theological meaning of baptism, that separates us from the vast majority of the Reformed world. For most, this is the bedrock or foundational issue as regards baptism. For some within the Presbyterian and Reformed movement, this issue is that which *makes* one Reformed. If one does not see baptism as being the New Testament sign of the covenant, then they cannot possibly be Reformed. As such, believers such as I, that insist upon a regenerate church membership, that state that baptism is something other than the sign of the covenant, are often considered to be unenlightened, ignorant or in error. Further, our commitment to the Reformed Faith is called into question. As a result, many within the Reformed community are hesitant to engage and cooperate with "Reformed Baptists", seeing that our name is really a misnomer, a contradiction.

All because of baptism.

In light of the serious nature of these concerns and charges, serious and careful study are not only desired but warranted.

And thus, we shall begin.

#### **II. Background/Context of the Passage**

Please turn with me to the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the epistle of Romans. We will be reading vv. 1-11 of chapter 6:

- 1 ¶ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
- 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
- 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
- 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from



- the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection:
  - 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.
  - 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.
  - 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:
  - 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
  - 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
  - 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

--Rom. 6.1-11

Here, in chapter 6 of Paul's epistle to the Romans, Paul mentions the concept of baptism. But to have a proper understanding of the concept as mentioned in chapter 6, we cannot examine this passage devoid of its context. A biblical hermeneutic demands that we examine and, in turn, interpret this passage within its historical and literary context.

As we can see from the chapter and verse numberings, this passage is found in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Romans. However, as we are well aware, this section had no chapter divisions or verse numberings when Paul authored the book almost 2000 years ago. Thus, to properly understand our passage is it imperative that we understand that which precedes the passage under discussion.

Romans is the most thorough and detailed of all of the epistles of the apostle Paul. In this epistle, Paul explains in detail the concepts of sin and salvation, salvation through faith in the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In chapter one, Paul speaks of the power of God that is in the gospel (cf. 1.16-17). In the remainder of chapter 1 Paul expounds on the sinfulness of man, of how man rejected and has continued to reject God and how man is continuing to follow and prosper in sin--sins of greed, sins of the flesh, sins in worship. Not only this, but sinful man now encourages others to join them in their sin and sinful lifestyles.

In chapter two of the epistle, Paul demonstrates that this sinfulness of man extends to the Jews as well, to those that have had the law and have known the oracles of God. In chapter three, Paul declares that all are under sin and that all are sinners before God, that none is righteous, that none seeks for God (cf. 3.10-20), whether Jew or Gentile. All have sinned.

In the end of chapter 3 (cf. v.21ff), we find the sacrifice that the LORD God has provided for this sin--the person of Jesus Christ. Through faith a person is justified by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

- 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.
- 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
- 22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:
- 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25 Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

- 27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.
- 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

--Rom. 3.20-28

In v. 28, Paul sets forth the biblical principle of justification through faith/belief, apart from works. The works of man, any effort on his part, have no place in the salvation of man (cf. Rom. 9.15).

In chapter four Paul further expounds upon the concept of justification by or through faith. This is the manner in which all of the saints, whether in the Old Testament or New, were justified before God. Thus, Paul uses Abraham as the example of those that are/were justified by faith. Further, Paul affirms that those so saved or justified are justified as a *result* of blessing, not of works:

- 1 ¶ What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
- 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.
- 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
- 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
- 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
- 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,
- 7 *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.
- 8 Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

--Rom. 4.1-8

Paul further explains that this blessedness that came upon Abraham came while he was uncircumcised. Thus, Paul shows that this state was prior to the giving of the law and the lawgiving that came generations later under Moses.

In chapter five, Paul speaks of the blessedness of being justified through the death of Christ. He speaks of the death of Christ and of what was accomplished in and through His blessed death:

- 1 ¶ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
- 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
- 3 And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;
- 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:
- 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.
- 6 ¶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
- 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.
- 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
- 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.
- 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.
- 11 And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

--Rom. 5.1-11

In vv. 12ff of chapter five, Paul speaks of the manner of the imputation of sin and of the righteousness that is in Christ. As Paul had stated earlier in chapter three, all had sinned. Now, in chapter five, we find the source of this sin--Adam and his sin. Adam was the

representative for all mankind, what theologians refer to as the "federal head". All have sinned because all were in Adam when he sinned. Thus, all have sinned. And from him all have inherited the sinful nature.

And likewise, now, in Christ, all that were given to the Son by the Father (cf. Jn. 6.37ff) also partake of His righteousness (cf. v. 18-19). Just as all that were in Adam shared in his sin, all that were in Christ shall share in His righteousness. And even though there was sin, grace was manifested to abound over sin (cf. vv. 20-21).

That brings us to chapter six, where Paul asks the question:

- 1 ¶ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
- 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

--Rom. 6.1-2

Here we find Paul discussing one significant outworking of being in Christ: how ought one live that is in Christ? And this is the question that Paul then answers in the remainder of chapters six, seven and eight. In sum, the child of God is to walk as Christ walked, in holiness and in obedience to the law. But not an obedience based on a legalistic idea of works-righteousness flowing out of their works. No, but an obedience flowing out of the love that the one so saved has for the Father and the Son. Further, this is an obedience and a holy life that one will be walking in also because of the working of the Spirit of God (cf. vv. 8.13-14).

This, then, is the context in which we find Paul mentioning the doctrine of baptism. God-willing, we will examine the passage more closely next week.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. Behold the wickedness that is sin

Cf. ch 1

Behold that which is the sin in man: idolatry, lust, sexual sins, greed. And behold how man rejoices in such sin. He is even an "evangelist" of evil things, to press others to follow him in his wicked pursuits.

#### 2. Behold the extent and breadth that is sin

Cf. ch 2 & 3.

Note how sin has infiltrated every aspect of life. Every culture has been contaminated by sin. Every person has been affected by sin. Every man and woman seeks that which is sin. No one seeks after God.

#### 3. Behold what manner of love the Father has had for us

Cf. Rom. 5.

- 6 ¶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
- 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.
- 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
- 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.
- 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more,

being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

- 11 And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

--Rom. 5.1-11

4. Behold how nowhere in this book does Paul ever mention baptism as being the sign of the new covenant.

This is the argument that many have made as regards the meaning of baptism. But we are to be biblical. And as such, we must confine and limit ourselves to the scriptures. And in so doing in the book of Romans, it would be rather odd, in light of all that we have examined regarding the context of Romans 6 that Paul would now interject this idea, that baptism is a sign of the new covenant, into his argument regarding the Christian walking in a manner that is after Christ. To do so seems to interject something that is foreign to his argument.

God willing, we will examine this passage in more detail in the coming week. For now, we need to see that such a view, that baptism is the new testament sign of the covenant, **is not found** in this passage.

## **Baptism and Unity with Christ: Part II**

### **Romans 6.1-11**

#### **I. Introduction**

Last week we entered the second phase of our study on baptism: the theological teachings of the scriptures concerning the meaning and significance of baptism. In this section, we will be examining, God-willing, the passages in the epistles that teach or speak of the practice of baptism. In our lesson last week, we began so doing by beginning to examine a very important passage concerning baptism found in the epistle of Romans: Rom. 6.1-11. In this passage Paul relates baptism to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

And in that this is such an important passage concerning the doctrine of baptism, we engaged in a brief review of the first eight chapters of the book of Romans, to see how this passage fits into the overall flow of the thought of Paul.

In that lesson we followed Paul's theological argument through the first part of the Roman epistle. In chapter one, we find Paul charging mankind with sin and a love of sin (cf. Rom. 1.18ff). In chapter two, we see Paul applying this principle of sin to the Jews (cf. Rom. 2.17-24). In chapter three we find Paul charging all men, whether Jew or Gentile, as being bound under and a slave to sin (Rom. 3.19-20). In the latter portion of chapter three Paul declares that Christ has been sent by the Father as a propitiation for sin, an appeasement of the wrath of God (cf. 3.21-28, esp v. 25). And in the end of this chapter Paul announces the biblical principle of salvation (justification) through faith (cf. Rom. 3.22).

In chapter 4, Paul elaborates on this vital principle, using the example of Abraham. Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation. Yet here, in Abraham, we find example of one that was justified through faith. Further, Paul speaks of the blessing of the one so justified. This justification is a blessing, an outflowing of the grace of God to sinners. David speaks of such blessing in v. 6-8 of chapter four.

In chapter five, Paul continues to speak of the blessedness of being justified through the death of Christ. In vv. 6-11 of chapter five, Paul speaks of the blessedness of this death and of the love that God had for sinful man in so sending His Son to die for such sinners. In the latter half of chapter five, Paul speaks of the imputation of sin and of the righteousness that is in Christ Jesus. Just as sin came to man and all sinned (in Adam), so will righteousness come to all given Christ by the Father through the death of Christ. In Adam, all died; in Christ, all that are His will be justified (cf. Rom. 5.19).

In vv. 20-21 of chapter five, Paul mentions the purpose of the law and the supremacy of grace over the sin manifested through the law. And it is at this point that we find ourselves at v. 1 of chapter six.

This, then, was a review of our lesson last week.

And thus, we shall begin our examination of vv. 1-11 of chapter 6 .

## II. Background/Context of the Passage

Please turn with me to the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the epistle of Romans. We will be reading vv. 1-11 of chapter 6:

- 1 ¶ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
- 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
- 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
- 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection:
- 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.
- 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.
- 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:
- 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
- 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
- 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

--Rom. 6.1-11

Here, in chapter 6 of Paul's epistle to the Romans, Paul mentions the concept of baptism. Yet this is not until verse 3. Having just stated that grace came to reign through righteousness (v. 5.21) Paul now asks the rhetorical question: *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* As we can see elsewhere the grace of God was used as an excuse for living in sin (eg--note Rom. 3.8). Thus, Paul cuts off this line of reasoning at the outset.

In v. 2, is his answer to the rhetorical question: *May it never be!* In the King James version, verse 2 reads God forbid. But this is not an accurate representation of the Greek at this point. The Greek reads: may it not be (lit, *mê genoito*). The Christian shall never remain or abide in sin just because he has forgiveness in Christ.

In the latter half of v. 2, Paul gives a reason for his answer: *How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* The child of God is dead to sin. As such, how shall he continue to live therein? How can one live in sin, when he is dead to sin? And thus, Paul answers his question with another question. The unspoken answer is that he cannot so live. Paul further elaborates on this point, expounding upon what he has written in v. 2, in v. 3.

In v. 3, Paul now gives the rationale for his statement of verse 2. In v. 2, Paul declared that the child of God is now dead to sin. Now, in v. 3, he continues along this same line and addresses how the child of God is dead to sin: he is dead to sin because of the work of Christ on his behalf (cf. ch 5.12ff). Note v. 3:

- 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

He begins by asking them yet another question: do you not know? Paul knew that the Roman believers knew and understood the significance of baptism and what it represented: *those baptised into Christ were baptised into his death*. Baptism was a public declaration before those present of Christ, of His work, and of His grace. The one so baptised was

baptised into Christ and was *identified* from that point as being one of Christ's.

Now Paul reminds them, that not only were they baptised into Christ and all for which He stood, they were specifically baptised into His death. The one so baptised was united in His death. Here we find that baptism represented the death of Christ in the mind of Paul. (Note again ch 5 and Paul's discussion of the vicarious nature of the death of Christ.) The one so baptised was baptised into the death of Christ. That is, they would be known to those present at the baptism as one that was identified with the death of Christ.

In v. 4, Paul continues to elaborate this point:

- 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Through baptism one is "co-buried" with Christ, as it were. Just as Christ was buried to confirm that He was truly dead, so is the one so baptised buried through baptism to represent that he also was buried with Christ. When Christ was buried, so was the child of God buried with Him.

Paul further elaborates this point by including the resurrection into this scenario. Not only was the child of God dead with Christ, not only was the child of God buried with Christ, he also was raised with Christ through the resurrection of the Son of God. Thus, we find here in Rom 6 that the child of God that is baptised is united with the death of Christ, the burial of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. As such, the child of God, in that he is risen to a newness of life with the risen Christ, he then ought to walk in a manner that is consistent with his risen nature. This is the point that Paul makes from the example of baptism.

In v. 5, we find that baptism represents this union with Christ:

- 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection:

Here we find that the child of God was united in the likeness of His death. What is that likeness? Is it not baptism? *Baptism is the likeness of His death, of His burial and of His resurrection.* Baptism does not unite us to Christ. There is no saving power in baptism itself. It represents the truths of the work of Christ on behalf of His people.

In Rom. 5.10 the children of God were reconciled with Christ *at the time of His death on the cross*. Through Christ's mediatory work as head of His people (Rom. 5.15-19) the work of Christ upon the cross was accomplished for His people. Baptism is public display in time of that work that was accomplished upon the cross, when He was crucified. Baptism represents that death which He died and the child of God's being in Him at the time of His death. Thus, the scriptures can speak of His children being united in His death, burial and resurrection. And baptism represents these great spiritual truths.

In vv. 6-7, Paul continues to speak of the union that the child of God has with the death of Christ:

- 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.
- 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.
- 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

Not only was the child of God united with the death and burial, Paul states that this union proceeds even to His actual crucifixion. In His death, our old man was co-crucified (as stated in the Greek). As such, the child of God ought not serve sin, for the old man is dead in Christ. And in being dead, he is free from sin (v. 7). And in that we were united with His death, we have hope through His resurrection: *we believe that we shall also live with him:...*

In vv. 9-11, Paul further expounds upon the truth of union with Christ and of the outworkings of that truth are:

- 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
- 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
- 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul set out to demonstrate why the child of God ought not walk in sin (cf. v. 1) and here in vv. 9-11 he concludes that, just as Christ rose from the dead in newness of life, so has the child of God that was united with Christ in this resurrection. Thus, the child of God ought to walk in this newness, for how could he walk in a manner that was part of his former life. Thus, Paul states in v. 11, that the child of God is to consider himself to be dead to sin. And why, because he actually was united with the death of Christ and his life is truly hidden in Christ. He died to sin, and so did the child of God that was united with him in His death by God's placing him in Christ and appointing that Christ should die on his behalf (cf. also Eph. 1.3ff).

#### *A Final Note regarding the union Christ and the child of God*

Before we leave this lesson I would like to make a point of clarification regarding the unity or union that exists between Christ and the child of God. As seen above, the child of God is said to have been "co-buried" and to be "co-resurrected" with Christ (cf. Rom. 6.4), "co-crucified" or "crucified together" (cf. Rom. 6.6).

Make no mistake, this unity or union is entirely divine in its origin, its application and outworking. Man has no part in this union. This can be seen in what we have discussed, both in this lesson and in our last.

And it is baptism, according to Paul, that is the symbol of this unity we share with Christ, a divine unity, that was planned before the beginning of the world (cf. Eph. 1.3ff), that was brought to pass in our being given to Christ (cf. Jn. 6.37ff) and in Him being made our representative or "federal head". Just as the sin of Adam was accounted as ours, in that he was our earthly head, so also was the righteousness of Christ accounted ours, to those that were His. And in being given to Him before the world began, He was our head, our federal head.

In vv. 12ff of Romans chapter five, Paul speaks of the manner of the imputation of sin and of the righteousness that is in Christ. As Paul had stated earlier in chapter three, all had sinned. Now, in chapter five, we find the source of this sin--Adam and his sin. Adam was the representative for all mankind. All have sinned because all were in Adam when he sinned. Thus, all have sinned. And from him all have inherited the sinful nature.

And likewise, now, in Christ, all that were given to the Son by the Father (cf. Jn. 6.37ff) also



partake of His righteousness (cf. v. 18-19). Just as all that were in Adam shared in his sin, all that were in Christ shall share in His righteousness. And even though there was sin, grace was manifested to abound over sin (cf. vv. 20-21).

Paul in Romans 6.6 speaks of being “crucified together” with Christ? When Christ was crucified, those that were in Christ were crucified as well. Because of the unity that existed due to the election of God and His predestinating love (cf. Eph. 1.5-6) those given to Him by the Father were in Him when these things took place. Whatever else that may be said regarding the unity that existed between the child of God and Christ, contextually from Rom. 5.12ff, through His being their federal or legal head, their representative, those given to the Son by the Father were in Christ at that time. This unity that existed at the time of the crucifixion is manifested in the life of the elect child of God when, by the Holy Spirit, the child of God is regenerated and faith and repentance are manifested by His working within the life of that one. Thus, this legal and ordained unity is thus manifested as an organic and spiritual unity as well. Again, all by the work of God on account of the work of Christ and applied by the ministration of the Holy Spirit in the life of each of the elect at the time of God’s appointing.

Thus, when I speak of the unity that the child of God has with Christ this is what I mean by that unity or union with Christ.

These then are the verses before us.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. Baptism represents the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and of the child of God’s relation with Him

Cf. Rom. 6.3-5 This is nothing more than the simple re-statement of the truth of these verses. Baptism represents that which Christ did for His children, and points to the truths behind the baptism.

#### 2. Baptism is not the issue; union with Christ is

In the latter verses of chapter 5 we saw the truth of the federal headship of both Adam and Christ, on behalf of their respective people. Now in chapter 6, Paul focuses upon one significant outworking of that headship--union with Christ. The child of God, in that Christ was His head, partook of the death, of the burial and of the resurrection of his Head, even Christ. Although it may come to the child of God in time, he was in Christ being reconciled to God even when Christ was on the cross (cf. Rom. 5.10). And baptism is a symbol and a representation of that relationship between Christ and His people, a union with His death, with His burial, and with His resurrection.

#### 3. Nowhere is baptism represented as the New Testament sign of the covenant.

Paul expounds why the child of God is not to remain in sin. He does so through a discussion and the significance of baptism to this topic. And nowhere is the covenant mentioned. Nowhere is the sign of this covenant mentioned. To interject such an idea into this discussion here is to interject an idea foreign to the context, the argument, and to the epistle as a whole.

## Baptism and the Sons of God

### Galatians 3.27

#### I. Review of Last Lesson

As you are aware, it is our intent to examine and study the theological teachings of the scriptures concerning the meaning and significance of baptism. In this section, we will be examining, God-willing, the passages in the epistles that teach or speak of the practice of baptism. Two weeks ago we examined one of the key passages as regards the meaning and significance of baptism: Romans 6.1-11. In that lesson, we noted many things concerning baptism related to its meaning and significance. Thus, before we begin, I would like to briefly review that lesson.

As you remember, we took two lessons to properly examine, not only the passage itself, but to better familiarise ourselves with the overall context and argument of the book of Romans to better understand the immediate context of Romans 6. In Romans Paul charges that all men, both Jew and Gentile, are all under sin (Rom. 1-3). Further, not only are all sinners, they are slaves to sin and there is none that desires to do good (cf. Rom. 3.10ff).

God, in His love for Christ and those given to Christ from eternity past, sent Christ to be a propitiation for their sins (Rom. 3.25). Through Christ God justified the sinners through faith (Rom. 3.26), this faith being a blessing of God (Rom. 4.6-8). In chapter 5, Paul

In chapter five, Paul continues to speak of the blessedness of being justified through the death of Christ. In vv. 6-11 of chapter five, Paul speaks of the blessedness of this death and of the love that God had for sinful man in so sending His Son to die for such sinners. In the latter half of chapter five, Paul speaks of the imputation of sin and of the righteousness that is in Christ Jesus. Just as sin came to man and all sinned (in Adam), so will righteousness come to all given Christ by the Father through the death of Christ. In Adam, all died; in Christ, all that are His will be justified (cf. Rom. 5.19).

In vv. 20-21 of chapter five, Paul mentions the purpose of the law and the supremacy of grace over the sin manifested through the law. This brings us to chapter 6. In chapter 6, we find Paul defending the grace of God from those that may see the grace of God as a means whereby one may continue in sin "that grace may abound". And it was within this context that Paul mentions baptism.

In v. 1 Paul asks the rhetorical question *How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* May it never be, Paul replies, answering his own question. In vv. 3-5 Paul gives reason as to why the child of God cannot live in his sin.

According to Paul the child of God is dead to sin. As such, how shall he continue to live therein? How can one live in sin, when he is dead to sin? And we found Paul using the practice of baptism to illustrate this point. In v. 3, he continues along this same line and addresses how the child of God is dead to sin: he is dead to sin by nature of his union with Christ (cf. v. 3). *Those baptised into Christ were baptised into his death.* Baptism was a public declaration before those present of Christ, of His

work, and of His grace. The one so baptised was baptised into Christ and was *identified* from that point as being one of Christ's.

Now Paul reminds them, that not only were they baptised into Christ and all for which He stood, they were specifically baptised into His death. The one so baptised was united in His death. Here we find that baptism represented the death of Christ in the mind of Paul. The one so baptised was baptised into the death of Christ. That is, they would be identified as one that was identified with the death of Christ.

In v. 4, we found Paul continuing to elaborate this point. Through baptism one is "co-buried" with Christ, as it were. Paul further elaborates this point by including the resurrection into this scenario. Not only was the child dead with Christ, not only was the child of God buried with Christ, he also was raised with Christ through the resurrection of the Son of God. Thus, we find here in Rom 6 that the child of God that is baptised is united with the death of Christ, the burial of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. As such, the child of God, in that he is risen to a newness of life with the risen Christ, he then ought to walk in a manner that is consistent with his risen nature. This is the point that Paul makes from the example of baptism.

In v. 5, we found that baptism represents this union with Christ: Here we find that the child of God was united in the likeness of His death. What is that likeness? Is it not baptism? *Baptism is the likeness of His death, of His burial and of His resurrection.* Baptism does not unite us to Christ. There is no saving power in baptism itself. It represents the truths of the work of Christ on behalf of His people.

Thus, we saw that baptism represents the child of God's union with Christ and his being united with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. And baptism represents this union with Christ. This was one of our main observations from this lesson.

We could say more as regards this passage, but in summary, baptism represents the child of God's union with Christ, a union with His death, burial and resurrection. This is what baptism symbolises.

## **II. Background/Context of the Passage**

This evening, I would like to examine another passage of the apostle Paul concerning the doctrine of baptism: Galatians 3.27. Please turn with me to the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the epistle of Galatians. We will be reading vv. 19-29:

- 19 ¶ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.
- 20 Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one.
- 21 *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.
- 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.
- 23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.
- 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
- 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

- 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
- 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
- 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
- 29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

--Gal. 3.19-29

Galatians is a book that is similar to Romans in many ways. Both of these epistles speak of the justification that is through faith in Jesus Christ. And in speaking of this justification, both of these books speak of union with Christ, and the child of God's identification with Him (cf. Gal. 2.20). One of the chief differences in emphasis between these two books is where Paul in Romans speaks of being dead to sin and of living in sin, Paul in Galatians speaks to those that wish to live in the law and under the law, that is, the old Mosaic Law wherein the Jewish Pharisees lived.

In Gal. 1, we find Paul speaking out against those that would bring "another gospel" to them, for it would seem that some within their midst were advocating a form of godliness based upon some form of law-keeping (cf. 2.16; 3.11). After giving a rather detailed account of his conversion and early Christian life, Paul describes the issues related to justification by works vs. justification through faith in chapter 2.

In chapter 3, we find Paul speaking against such as would desire to keep the law. And as in Romans, Paul uses the example of Abraham to illustrate his point. Abraham was justified through faith (cf. Gal 3.8-9). And again, we find that those that are of the faith of Abraham are those that are blessed.

Paul continues speaking of those that follow the law are cursed if they do not keep the whole law (cf. Gal. 3.10). Rather, no man was ever justified by the works of the law, for the just shall live by faith (Gal. 3.11).

[As a side comment, the doctrine of the covenant of works is commonly taught within Reformed circles. This doctrine simply stated, is that man could, if he were without sin, be justified by his works. But note Paul's words in both v. 11 and 21. By the words of Paul, this is an unbiblical sentiment.]

Paul continues in stating that Christ redeemed His people from the curse of the law, in that He became cursed (cf. v. 3.13). Christ was so cursed that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles (3.14).

In v. 12, Paul states that the law is not of faith. And because of sins the law was given (cf. v. 19). The law is that which points us to Christ, just as it did Abraham (cf. Jn 8.56).

[As a side comment, there are those today that state that Abraham, even though he was justified by faith, was justified by a different kind of faith than are we, for he did not have the same kind of knowledge of Christ as we do today. Whatever that knowledge was, Christ tells us in Jn. 8.56 that Abraham saw Christ and in so seeing, rejoiced. Whatever his knowledge was, Abraham was justified in the same manner as all others, through faith in Christ. And this is according to our own Lord and Saviour's words.]

And just as Abraham was justified through faith, so shall all His people be justified (cf. v. 24).

In v. 26 Paul states:

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul continues speaking of the work of Christ. In v.26 he refers to the work of God in adoption. Through faith the child of God is made just that: a child of God. In v. 25, Paul speaks of the blessing of justification with which God has blessed His elect. And this blessing has come to them through faith, this faith being a blessing of God (cf. v. Gal 3.9. Cf. also Rom. 4.1-6).

Now, in v. 26, Paul turns to another of the great blessings of the Christian faith: adoption. According to the Revision of the Midland Confession of Faith, states the following concerning adoption:

11th. That, God, purely out of the depths of His grace, has also adopted<sup>6</sup> all those whom He has justified, calling them His own sons and daughters, Christ being their brother<sup>7</sup>, exalting them to a position infinitely higher than that held by any other created being<sup>8</sup>, that is, that they should be called the children of God, and making them to be partakers of all the blessings and privileges thereof<sup>9</sup>.

Adoption is a rare and precious blessing indeed. The Jews in the Old Testament times were told of a coming promised deliverer--the Messiah (or the Christ). Forgiveness of sins was prophesied about throughout the Old Testament writings. Yet the blessing of adoption goes even beyond these great blessings. Reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, regeneration, justification, sanctification, glorification--all of these are a part of the salvific work and are *needed* blessings for one to stand complete in the presence of God. *Adoption is an added blessing*. It is not a *needed* blessing for salvation. It is an extravagance. If there were no adoption, we could still enjoy the blessings of the new heavens and the new earth forever. But now we will enjoy them as God's own sons and daughters. He has adopted us into *His own family*.

In v. 27, Paul now reminds the believers to whom he was writing of another blessing: having Christ. In v. 27, Paul states:

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Here we find Paul using the practice of baptism to remind these believers of their being in Christ. Those that have been baptised have put on Christ. Literally, this term, *enduô*, is a term that one would use to describe the clothes that one would put on. In the context, the one so baptised was identified with the Christ for whom he was baptised. In v. 26, Paul declares that the Galatian believers were sons of God through faith. Now, in v. 27, through baptism, the believer declares that he is identified with the work of Christ. Baptism is an outward manifestation of the inward work of God in the life of the elect child of God. In baptism, the believer, puts on, that is, is identified that He is a son of God, one that has an interest in the grace of God, in what God through Christ has done for the elect sinner.

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<sup>6</sup> Rom. 8.14-17; Gal. 3.26, 4.4-7

<sup>7</sup> Mt. 6.9; Mk. 3.33-35; Gal. 4.4-7; Heb. 2.10-14

<sup>8</sup> Heb.2.16; Rev. 21.1-7,9,22-27

<sup>9</sup> Eph. 1.3-6, 2,4-7; I Jn. 3.1ff

What is not said in Galatians 3 is of what this work of Christ consisted. This, as we saw in our last lesson, was explained by Paul in Romans 6, where Paul shows that baptism is a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and of the believer's union (through the work of God) with Christ.

One significant outworking or result that those have that have put on Christ is found in v. 28:

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

For those in Christ, there is unity and oneness. There is unity, in that all are united with Christ. There is oneness, in that, whether Jew or Greek, all are now in the same person. As such, that which may have made them different has been done away. In Christ, Jew nor Greek means nothing. Bond or free. Nothing. Male or female. All are equal in Christ and have equal footing before their Maker.

And in their being in Christ, they are now heirs according to the promise, just as Abraham was (cf. v. 29).

These, then, are the verses before us.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. The law precedes faith

From the passage before us, we can see one of the functions of the law of God. The law teaches of the God of the Bible. Further, it teaches man how he is to serve God. It also teaches him how he has failed God and how no amount of works can please God. The law points to Christ. Thus, Paul calls it the schoolmaster to Christ.

#### 2. Behold the blessing of adoption

Of all the blessings of God, this is the most extravagant, that we, sinners and those that hated God, should be called His sons and daughters, even the kin of Christ Himself. Behold the height of this blessing.

#### 3. Baptism represents our being in Christ

Those that are baptised are those that have put on Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has caused us to be clothed with His Son, even with the righteousness that can only be found in Him.

#### 4. For those baptised, there is no division; all are equal.

From v. 28, we saw that all are the same in Christ. One is not better than another, as the Jews commonly thought. One is not lower than another. All are equal because of the sovereign work of God in His people.

## **“One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism”**

### **Ephesians 4.5**

#### **I. Review of Last Lesson**

In May of last year, we began a study concerning the doctrine of baptism. At that time, it was our intent to examine the doctrine from an exegetical standpoint, that is, to look at the passages that mention this doctrine and examine them within their contexts. In our first lesson, I noted:

As the title (of this series) states, it will be the design of this study to examine the biblical data as regards this doctrine, rather than making a theological survey of all that has been said by various authors as regards this doctrine. Although we may examine a statement from a particular author from time to time, it is only to better understand either the truth of God’s word, or to illustrate an errant view of this doctrine.

To this end, we have intended to examine this doctrine in the following fashion:

- the historical manifestation of the doctrine, examining passages from primarily the gospels and the book of Acts, that chronicle the practice of baptism,
- the theological teaching concerning this doctrine, examining the passages primarily from the epistles, that speak of the meaning of baptism, or speak of some theological aspect/teaching related to baptism,
- the practice of baptism itself, examining those passages that address the mode of baptism, or how it was practiced by the early church,
- lastly, to look at some passages related to the discussion of baptism, or to examine problematic passages

For the past several weeks, we have taken a break from our study of this doctrine, due to travel, various commitments, and the inherent difficulty of several of the passages under examination (ie--more study was warranted for these passages). It is my intent to return to this study this evening.

When we stopped, we were in the midst of the second section of our study, concerning the meaning of baptism. We had previously examined two passages: Romans 6.1-11 and Galatians 3.25. In Romans 6 we found one of the clearest statements regarding the meaning of baptism, relating baptism to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and of the child of God identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

In Galatians 3 we examined baptism and its relationship to the work of Christ, and how those baptised are identified with the work of Christ. Baptism was an outward manifestation of the inward work of Christ. Further, we noted how that those baptised are now “one in Jesus Christ” (cf. Gal. 3.28). For those in Christ, there is unity and oneness. There is unity, in that all are united with Christ. There is oneness, in that, whether Jew or Greek, all are

now in the same person. As such, that which may have made them different has been done away. In Christ, Jew nor Greek means nothing. Bond or free. Nothing. Male or female. All are equal in Christ and have equal footing before their Maker.

And it is this unity that is the issue of the passage before us this evening.

## II. Background/Context of the Passage

This evening, I would like to examine another passage of the apostle Paul concerning the doctrine of baptism: Ephesians 4.5. To better understand this passage, I would like to read the extended context of this passage, vv. 1-16:

- 1 ¶ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 ¶ With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- 4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- 6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.
- 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
- 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.
- 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?
- 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)
- 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
- 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:
- 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:
- 14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
- 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:
- 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

--Eph. 4.1-16

I realise that we are going to be examining a very small section of this larger passage. But, as we have seen upon several occasions, context is critical to properly understanding a passage. And thus it is with this passage as well.

It is clear from the passage that we have just read, that the unity or the "oneness" of the body is a main point (if not *the* main point) concerning which Paul is speaking. Note the following:

- unity of the Spirit (v. 3)
- one body, one Spirit, one hope (v. 4)
- one Lord, one faith, one baptism (v. 5)
- one God and Father (v. 6)



- unity of the faith (v. 13)
- whole body (v. 16)

Note also Paul's use of terms "body" (cf. vv. 4, 12, 16 [2x]), which speaks of an organic unified whole in the writings of Paul (cf. I Cor 12). Paul also uses terms such as "one another" (cf. v. 2) and "every one of us (v. 7). Thus it appears that the unity of the body is a central issue of the passage at hand.

And in the midst of this discussion is a mention of baptism (v. 5). And it is to this use that we now turn.

In vv. 2-6, Paul begins this discussion concerning the unity of the body. But the discussion does not really begin there. In chapters 2-3 of this epistle, Paul has been speaking of the "mystery" of the gospel. Paul, in chapter 3, explains what this mystery is:

- 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:
- 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,
- 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
- 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
- 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

--Eph 3.2-6

The mystery, that was in "other ages" not made known, and through the apostles has now been made known, is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and of the same body as the God-fearing Jews. This is why Paul speaks of "one new man" in chapter 2.15, and of both groups being brought near by the blood of Christ (cf. 2.13). Now, in chapter 4, Paul exhorts these believers in the church of Ephesus, to walk in unity.

As has been shown, these believers were called, to be part of one new man. There was to be no Jewish congregation and another gentile congregation in Ephesus. No, these were called to be one new man. And now Paul exhorts these believers to walk accordingly (cf. v. 1).

In v. 2, Paul commands these believers to bear with one another. Clearly, in such a mixed congregation, members could irritate members. Jews having difficulties with the Gentiles and their Christian liberty. Gentiles constantly being exposed to Jewish traditions. Countless cultural differences. And yet, Paul advocates unity and bearing with one another. And it is a qualified bearing: with humility and meekness and in love (v. 2).

Further, this bearing with one another was not just a mere toleration, it was a bearing with one another that was to flow out of the oneness that now existed in this unique mixed community. They were to endeavour (or literally, *to make haste*) to keep this unity. It was something that they were to be busy at doing. Paul commands them to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There was a peace in this new community. And out of this peace flowed a bond, a unity (v. 3).

In v. 4, Paul now emphasises the unity of this body, stating that there was one body and one Spirit. Those who were unified in this bond of peace would be walking in a unified manner: One body lead by one Spirit. Likewise, this one body was called into one calling, that of bringing glory unto their God and Father (cf. 3.10-11) by revealing the manifold wisdom of God in so creating such a body in Christ.

In v. 5, Paul now mentions that which it was that unified the body: this church was unified in one Lord, one faith and one baptism. They were unified in one Lord, in that they were worshipers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had died for them. This was the gospel:

- 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;
- 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:
- 5 And that he was seen of (many):

--I Cor. 15.3-5

This was their Lord.

This church had one faith in this Lord as well. Note Paul's states regarding Timothy, that Timothy had made the good confession before men (cf. I Tim. 6.11-12). Of what this confession consisted we do not know, but it may have been similar to what is found in I Tim. 3:

- 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

--I Tim 3.16

It may have had similar elements to I Cor 15, which we have just read (above). In any event, we can also note from both the words of Paul and of John, that those that did not confess the biblical doctrine concerning the Christ had no part in the church:

- 3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;
- 4 He is proud, knowing nothing,...

--I Tim. 6.3-4a

- 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.
- 10 ¶ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed:
- 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

--II Jn 9-11

It is clear that there was one confession, one faith in this Lord and Christ.

And there was one symbol of this unity, of one's confession: baptism. As we have clearly seen in our study over the past several months, confession was an integral part of baptism. Unless one confessed his sins there was no baptism under John. And it appears that after the death of Christ, that there was some manner of confession concerning the person of Christ. One could not be baptised if he did not confess his belief in Christ. Note the example of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:

- 36 And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?
- 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said,

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

- 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.
- 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

--Acts 8.36-39

And it appears that something similar was done with Timothy, as we have seen above. Baptism was the symbol of the oneness that one had with Christ, and with the doctrine of this Christ. They confessed to believe in the Christ and the doctrine of the Christ.

In v. 6, Paul concludes with that which unifies the children of God, the Father Himself. It is God who is over all and through all and in us all. He is in us. Thus, we are one in Him. There, in Him, is a unity that surpasses all others.

These, then, are the verses before us.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. There is no place for separate but equal congregations.

There are those today that advocate having different churches for different ethnic or socio-economic groups. Black churches. Hispanic churches. Traditional churches. Progressive churches. To man, it seems to make sense to have these separate groups, so that more can be "reached" for Christ. But such separations are not biblical. Apart from having meetings based primarily upon language and/or sincere theological differences, there is no warrant for separating the people of God. In fact, I propose that such separations actually do harm to the body. The goal of Paul was that the believers be part of one body, not several sub-bodies functioning independently.

#### 2. Doctrine is important

There are those today that stress that doctrine is not important. But this is not what we have seen this evening. Could you imagine Paul baptising one that refused to make the "good confession"? The good confession was a statement, a doctrinal statement concerning one's convictions regarding the Christ. If one did not have biblical convictions, would Paul have baptised him? Certainly not. Note again Paul's words concerning those that did not agree with the doctrine of the Lord:

- 3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;
- 4 He is proud, knowing nothing,...

--I Tim. 6.3-4a

#### 3. There can be no unity without Christ

#### 4. There can be no unity without unity concerning His person (that is, doctrine)

## Baptism and Circumcision

### Colossians 2.11-15

#### I. Review of Last Lesson

In our last lesson concerning baptism, we examined Paul and his statement regarding "one Lord, one faith, one baptism". It is clear, from a reading of Ephesians 4, that the unity or the "oneness" of the body is a main point (if not *the* main point) concerning which Paul is speaking. Note the following: unity of the Spirit (v. 3), one body, one Spirit, one hope (v. 4), one Lord, one faith, one baptism (v. 5), one God and Father (v. 6), unity of the faith (v. 13), whole body (v. 16)

Note also Paul's use of terms "body" (cf. vv. 4,21,16 [2x]), which speaks of an organic unified whole in the writings of Paul (cf. I Cor 12). Paul also uses terms such as "one another" (cf. v. 2) and "every one of us (v. 7). Thus it appears that the unity of the body is a central issue of the passage at hand.

In reviewing the immediate context, I would like to read the passage at hand:

- 2 ¶ With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- 4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- 6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

In more closely examining the passage, we find Paul (in v. 2) emphasising that these believers are to be bearing with one another. In v. 3, we find Paul admonishing the unity of the Spirit in the "bond of peace". In v. 4, Paul further emphasises the unity of the body, stating that there is one body and one Spirit that is over, in and through this body. Further there is one hope. And in the midst of this discussion concerning unity and "oneness" is a mention of baptism (v. 5).

In v. 5, Paul now mentions that which it was that unified the body: this church was unified in one Lord, one faith and one baptism. They were unified in one Lord, in that they were worshipers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had died for them. This was the gospel (cf. I Cor. 15.3-5). This was their Lord.

This church had one faith in this Lord as well. Note Paul's states regarding Timothy, that Timothy had made the good confession before men (cf. I Tim. 6.11-12). We noted also I Tim. 3.16:

- 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

--I Tim 3.16

We noted also, that those that did not confess the biblical doctrine concerning the Christ had no part in the church (cf. I Tim. 6.3-4a; II Jn 9-11). It is clear that there was one

confession, one faith in this Lord and Christ.

And there was one symbol of this unity, of one's confession: baptism. As we have clearly seen in our study over the past several months, confession was an integral part of baptism. Unless one confessed his sins there was no baptism under John. And it appears that after the death of Christ, that there was some manner of confession concerning the person of Christ. One could not be baptised if he did not confess his belief in Christ (eg--Acts 8.36-39). And we observed that something similar was done with Timothy, as we have seen above. Baptism was the symbol of the oneness that one had with Christ, and with the doctrine of this Christ. They confessed to believe in the Christ and the doctrine of the Christ.

This was our last lesson.

## II. Background/Context of the Passage

This evening, I would like to examine the next passage concerning baptism, written by Paul to the church that was in Colosse. It is found in chapter two of that book:

- 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
- 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
- 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:
- 11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:
- 12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
- 13 ¶ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;
- 14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;
- 15 *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

--Col. 2.8-15

To better understand the immediate context, one needs to understand the argument of the book that Paul is making in writing to the Colossian church. It would appear that some within the Colossian church, false believers, were trying to "take them captive" through some sort of Gnostic or philosophical arguments regarding who Christ was and what He had accomplished. Note the following verses:

- 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
- 16 ¶ Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:
- 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.
- 18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,...
- 20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,
- 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

- 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?  
 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

--Col. 2.8, 16-18, 20-23

To counter this heretical threat, Paul, beginning in chapter 1, sets forth the excellencies of Christ and of His work. After his introduction and expression of thankfulness for the Colossian believers, Paul begins declaring the excellencies and the pre-eminence of Christ:

- the Son, in whom we have redemption (v. 14),
- who is the image of the invisible God (v. 15),
- through whom all things were created (v. 16)
- who is before all thing (v. 17)
- in whom all things hold together (v. 17)
- who is the head of the body, even the church (v. 18)
- who has reconciled us to God (v. 20)

After declaring these wonderful truths concerning the Christ, the Messiah of God, Paul admonishes these believers against those that would lie to them concerning the Christ and other spiritual truth, in v. 8 of chapter 2, as we have already seen. Immediately thereupon, Paul again declares the excellency of Christ, that He is the express image of God in bodily form (v. 9).

In v. 10, Paul now relates this sublime truth to these believers: *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:...* This same Christ, who is the express image of the Father, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (cf. v. 2.3) is united with His people. Those that are children of God are united with this Great One, that is the Head of all power and authority. Note Paul's words in v. 10: *And ye are complete in him, ...* . In Him believers are complete and perfect. They are united with this one, who has all power and wisdom. And in Him they are complete (cf again v. 2.10).

In chapter one, Paul had spoken of the creative work of the Christ, that He was the Creator of all things. Now in v. 11 of chapter 2, Paul speaks of the re-creative power of Christ:

- 11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Here we find, in v. 11, that those that are in Him have been circumcised with a "circumcision made without hands,..." Here we find Paul using the practice of circumcision to represent the theological concept of regeneration. The use of circumcision in this manner is not new in the scriptures. Note the following:

- 5 And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.
- 6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

--Deut. 30.5-6

The result of the circumcision of God is a true love of God and a sincere obedience to the words and commands of God.

Likewise, Paul elsewhere speaks of this "divine" circumcision:

- 28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in

the flesh:

29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

--Rom. 2.28-29

From this passage we learn this divine circumcision is a spiritual circumcision. And here in Colossians 2 we find that this circumcision is made "without hands", that is, it is not of human origin. It originates from God. And those that are in Him have been circumcised by Him, that is, they have had a divine working in their spirits, a working that is not of man, but of God, wherein they now love God and walk according to His ways. This is regeneration--the re-creating of the spiritual life within the life of a person. This is the new birth, or rather, the birth from above (cf. Jn. 3.3 in the Greek), and work of the Spirit. This is verse 11.

In v. 12, we find a statement from Paul that those that have been so circumcised in the church of Colosse:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

In the midst of this discussion of the believer being united with Christ and of the Colossians being complete "in Him" (cf. v. 10), we find mention of baptism. We must be careful as to what conclusions we draw in the study this passage. These words have been used by countless men through the centuries to somehow teach that baptism regenerates, that somehow, the one so being baptised is somehow made a believer.

This is not the teaching of the passage. As we have seen, circumcision did not make one a Jew. Circumcision was a sign that one was part of the covenant community. Likewise, so is baptism. As we saw in our lesson from Romans 6, baptism was a sign of the unity that the child of God had with Christ.

We need to note also again the words of v. 11:

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Note it is a *circumcision made without hands,...* . The circumcision that transpired was one that was *spiritual* in origin. As we saw from Deuteronomy, God is the one who so circumcises, that is, regenerates. Man, whether it is the one being baptised or the one administering the baptism, has no part in the regeneration process.

Note also the words: *wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead*. Most modern translations translate that which follows the word "faith" as that which is the object of that faith. Although this could be a valid translation, I think that this may not be the emphasis that Paul is making. Usually (but not always), the object of faith/believing is in the dative case. But here, the words "...the operation of God,..." are in the genitive case. Thus, this phrase could equally be translated as faith "by the operation (or working) of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Martin Luther understood these words in this manner. This same power that raised Christ from the dead is that which operates in the child of God. Again, God is the Author of this work. It is a work "made without hands". Note also John 6.29 in this context.

Thus, baptism does not regenerate; God does. Baptism does not save; God does. Baptism is

the sign of the unity of the child of God and Christ, a symbol of the oneness they now share in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (cf. Rom. 6.1ff) *because of the working of God through Christ within their lives* (cf. Col. 2.12). And in this context, baptism is the sign that the one so baptised has been "circumcised with a circumcision made without hands", that is, regenerated. This is the significance of baptism. And this is what we find mentioned here in v. 12.

In v. 13, we find mention again of the divine working related to regeneration:

13 ¶ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Through the working of God the Colossians were quickened in Him, even though they were dead in their sins. This is sovereign grace. This is the Gospel--God saving sinners when they could do nothing to save themselves. Paul concludes this verse by mentioning the forgiveness that is in Christ. And in v. 14 we have mention of how this forgiveness was accomplished:

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

In v. 12, Paul mentioned the power of God that raised Christ from the dead. Now here in v. 14, we find how God took these sins away--through the death of Christ upon the cross. Thus, we find that the cross is exceedingly important in the gospel message. Many will declare the forgiveness that was secured through the cross, but at the same time are ashamed of the means by which God secured that forgiveness. No, the cross has a prominent place in the work of Christ. In fact, the one so baptised is declaring his sharing in this crucifixion. No, the cross is vitally important. Through the cross, real sins were atoned.

In v. 15, Paul concludes this passage in stating that which Christ accomplished in the heavens by His sacrifice:

15 *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Through His death, Christ displayed the power and wisdom of God. Much more could be said of this. Suffice it to say, that the death that Christ died was no failure, but was one that was most excellent and efficacious in its accomplishments, and will forever bring glory to the Lord of Hosts.

These, then, are the verses before us.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. It is those that were believing that were baptised.

Rather than this passage being a definitive link between circumcision and baptism, as the paedobaptists claim, it is a demonstration that it was those that were regenerate, by the hand of God and God alone, that were baptised. Baptism has nothing to do in and of itself with circumcision. To claim that baptism is related to circumcision is to fail to understand Paul's main point regarding the circumcision "made without hands".



2. Baptism is a sign of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and of the child of God's share in this work of Christ.

As we have seen, this is the import of baptism. Time and time again, we have seen baptism related to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. And here we find this again.

3. Baptism does not save; God does.

Man is not saved by ceremony any more than Abraham was. No, man is saved by the hand of God working within the life of the child of God.

4. Man does nothing to save himself.

Man is dead in his trespasses and sins. He does nothing to please God. He brings nothing to God. He has no part in his salvation. Just as a corpse has nothing to do with the resurrection, so does the soul that is dead with his regeneration.

5. There is no basis for judgment for the child of God

There cannot be. The accusations were taken away. They were nailed to the cross. In Christ, I no longer face judgment. Those sins were taken away.

## **“Even Baptism Doth Also Now Save Us...”**

### **I Peter 3.22**

#### **I. Review of Last Lesson**

In our last lesson concerning baptism, we examined the issue circumcision and baptism, that was found in Colossians chapter 2. In that lesson we noted that, after declaring the excellencies of Christ (in chapters 1-2), Paul admonishes these believers against those that would lie to them concerning the Christ and other spiritual truth (Col. 2.8). Paul again declares the excellency of Christ, that He is the express image of God in bodily form (v. 9).

In v. 10, Paul states the child of God’s relation to this divine being in bodily form: *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:....* In Him believers are complete and perfect. They are united with this one, who has all power and wisdom. And in Him they are complete (cf again v. 2.10).

In v. 11 of chapter 2, Paul speaks of the re-creative power of Christ: *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:* We noted at that time that Paul was using the practice of circumcision to represent the theological concept of regeneration (cf. Deut 30.5-6; Rom. 2.28-29).

From Col. 2.11 we learned that this divine circumcision is a spiritual circumcision, that it was made “without hands”, that is, it was not of human origin. It originated from God. And those that are in Him have been circumcised by Him, that is, they have had a divine working in their spirits, a working that is not of man, but of God, wherein they now love God and walk according to His ways. This is regeneration--the re-creating of the spiritual life within the life of a person. This is the new birth, or rather, the birth from above (cf. Jn. 3.3 in the Greek), and work of the Spirit. The result of the circumcision of God is a true love of God and a sincere obedience to the words and commands of God. This was verse 11.

In v. 12, Paul continues: *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* As we saw last time, circumcision did not make one a Jew. Circumcision was a sign that one was part of the covenant community. Likewise, so is baptism. As we saw in our lesson from Romans 6, baptism was a sign of the unity that the child of God had with Christ.

We also noted the words: *wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* As we saw, the phrase “...the operation of God,...” is best understood “...by the operation (or working) of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” This same power that has raised Christ from the dead also has raised the child of God from the dead, with baptism being the sign of that work and of the child of God’s participation in that work, by the power, even the hand of God.

In v. 13, we found mention again of the divine working related to regeneration. Through the working of God the Colossians were quickened in Him, even though they were dead in their sins. This is sovereign grace. This is the Gospel--God saving sinners when they could do nothing to save themselves. Paul concludes this verse by mentioning the forgiveness that is

in Christ. And in v. 14 we have mention of how this forgiveness was accomplished. In v. 15, Paul concluded this passage in stating that which Christ accomplished in the heavens by His sacrifice.

In concluding we noted that it was the regenerated that were baptised. In no instance were the unregenerate (ie--infants) brought for baptism. We also noted that baptism (again) was seen as a sign of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and of the child of God's participation in that death, burial and resurrection.

This then was our exposition in our last lesson.

## II. Background/Context of the Passage

This evening, we will be examining I Peter 3, where Peter speaks of Christ preaching to the spirits who are now in prison, and of Peter's relating this to the time of Noah, and his subsequent application of these truths to baptism.

In our last lesson, I had mentioned in passing of the difficulty in properly exegeting the Colossians 2 passage. This difficulty was due, not so much to any inherent difficulty found within the passage itself, but with errant interpretations of that passage. This evening, the passage before us is difficult for the same reason--what others have said regarding the passage. But, it is also difficult in that Peter speaks of issues that are nowhere else mentioned within the word of God. Although these difficulties are not directly related to the issue of baptism, but in that these difficult verses (vv. 19-20) are directly prior to the verse in question (re baptism [v. 21]), it has lent additional confusion to an otherwise rather clear teaching regarding baptism, thus making proper interpretation difficult at best.

This evening, I would like to examine the next passage concerning baptism, I Peter 3:

- 13 And who *is* he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?
- 14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are* ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;
- 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:
- 16 ¶ Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.
- 17 For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.
- 18 ¶ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:
- 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;
- 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.
- 21 ¶ The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:
- 22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

--I Pet. 3.13-23

Peter states in v. 13: *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* Even a cursory reading of this small epistle reveals that suffering is a prominent

theme of the book (cf. I Pet. 1.6ff, 2.19ff, 4.1, 4.12ff, 5.8-9 for example). Here in chapter 3, Peter again mentions suffering of the child of God, 3.13-16, in suffering for the sake of righteousness.

In v. 17, he mentions suffering for the sake of "well doing". And, as is his fashion, he presents Christ as an example of suffering for the child of God. Christ also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (v. 18). And Christ did so, that He might bring us to God. Here, Peter mentions the design of the atonement--to bring sinners to God. They could only be brought to God through the sacrifice of Himself: *the just for the unjust*. Peter continues in his description of the work of Christ: *being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:...* Christ died for His people, as Paul states in his declaration of the gospel in I Cor. 15. Christ died for sinners.

Peter then states that He was made alive or quickened in the Spirit. It is at this point that the meaning of Peter's words become difficult. The difficulty continues through to v. 20.

In v. 19, there is the question as to whether Peter is speaking of the spirit of Christ, that is his life, being made alive, or of His being made alive by the Holy Spirit. This latter understanding is apparently how the translators of the King James version understood the passage. If this reference refers to the spirit of Christ (that is, His life), then this then would be a reference to the resurrection: He was made alive in the Spirit, never to taste death again (Rom. 6.9). And contextually, it would seem, that whatever understanding is preferred, that the issue at hand is the resurrection of Christ, of His being made victorious over death.

In v. 19, we have mention of Christ preaching to those that are now in prison. Of what Peter speaks, I know not. Commentators differ widely as to what is or could be meant by these words. Some see this as Christ's descent into hell, as made mention in the Apostles' Creed. Others see that the reference is to Christ speaking to the ones that are in prison *now* when He spoke to them in the preaching of Noah *then* in spirit. Still others have some other interpretation.

Again, I state that I do not know of what Peter speaks. But what we can glean from this verse, is that it is a testimony to the victory of Christ and God, in that Christ was victorious over death in His death.

In v. 20, Peter now mentions the longsuffering of God, Noah and the building of the ark. From one understanding of Genesis 6.3, some have said that God waited 120 years to punish the sinful world of that day, while Noah built the ark. In any event, we know from the scriptures that God is great in longsuffering and patience toward the wicked. As Peter states in his second epistle, some have taken this for proof that God will not punish sins. However, this is not the case, just as it was not the case with those of Noah's day. Only eight were saved through the water, as he states. The flood was proof that God will not overlook sins.

This brings us now to v. 21 and baptism. Peter here relates the deliverance of Noah and those with him to baptism:

21 ¶ The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

The difficulty in this verse is twofold: first, what is the meaning of the Greek word, *antitupos*, here translated as "like figure". The second difficulty is the understanding of the meaning of the word *saves*, when it is used in connection to baptism. Further, it would seem that these two issues are interconnected. Further these are complicated by a Greek construction that has been characterised as "puzzling" by one commentator<sup>10</sup>. Thus, we must proceed carefully.

According to the Bauer-Arndt-Gingerich-Danker Greek Lexicon of New Testament Greek, the word, *antitupos*, typically refers to "corresponding to something that has gone before"<sup>11</sup> (although there is

<sup>10</sup> Wayne Grudem. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: I Peter*. InterVarsity Press. 1988. p. 162.

<sup>11</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. University of Chicago Press. 1979. p. 76

question as to exact meaning here as well). The anti-type was that which went up against a type, and typically was regarded as secondary to the type. Hence, it can be translated as "copy". This word is used only 2x in the scriptures. The other use found in Heb. 9.24:

- 23 ¶ *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*
- 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are the figures (antitupa)* of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:  
--Heb. 9.23-24

As this relates to our passage, this may indicate that baptism is a copy or corresponds to something else as well. Most commentators see this correspondence as to that which has just gone before (ie-- the flood). And in one sense, both do refer to some aspect of judgment upon man. But nowhere else is the flood as figure of baptism used in the scriptures. But we do know that baptism is a figure or a symbol of the union of the child of God with Christ (cf. Rom. 6.1ff). Thus, it would seem that Peter is here referring to the symbolic or typical nature of baptism. Baptism is not the reality behind the type; union with Christ is the reality to which it points.

Thus, the "saving" spoken of here is a reference to the saving work of Christ, which baptism represents. This understanding seems to be in line with that which Peter states in the following words: *(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:....* Peter here shows the true nature of baptism. It was not just another Jewish cleansing ritual. Nothing was removed by the baptism. Rather it was an answer or appeal of the good conscience towards God. Baptism was a testimony of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and of the child of God's participation in this sacrificial work. As such, there was an answering to any that may bring a charge against the elect child of God (cf. Rom. 8.33). And baptism was the symbol, the type, that represented that which God had done on behalf of that child of God.

Peter concludes this verse with a mention of the resurrection. As we saw before in our teaching regarding the gospel (I Cor 15.3-5), the resurrection was the proof that all that Christ said about His work and Himself was true. And this is what saves the child of God--the work of Christ. And the resurrection is the proof of the veracity of the salvation that Christ obtained. The child of God is saved through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and baptism is a testimony of that saving work of God through Christ.

Peter concludes this passage with a continued reflection upon the outworkings of the resurrection:

- 22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Here we find mention of the present state of Christ: He is in the heavens. This is testimony, in and of itself, to the acceptable nature of the sacrifice. If the sacrifice of Christ were not pleasing to God, if God were not appeased with this sacrifice, He would not be in heaven with God. Further, not only is Christ in the heavens with the Father, He is at the position of most honour: the right hand of God. In eastern societies, to sit at the right hand of someone was to be in the place of most honour. The only place of more honour was the throne of the king itself. Thus, Peter states that this is where Christ is, the place of most honour, at the right hand of God Himself.

Not only this, but we find mention of the fact that all of the spiritual realm has been made subject to Him as well. Again, from what we know of the scriptures, Christ has the same authority over these beings as does God Himself. All has been made subject to Him. Here we find a precursor of that which will take place upon the great day of judgment. Note Paul's words in Philippians:

- 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:  
6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:  
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

- 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
- 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
- 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;
- 11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- Phil. 2.5-11

Here in a similar passage that speaks both of the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ, we find mention of all being made subject to Christ and of all giving Him praise. As Peter has shown, Christ is in the heavens now, at the right hand of God. And this is His position for eternity.

In closing, it is interesting to note that in our last two lessons, in studying baptism, that we have had mention by the biblical authors of the victory of Christ, and of His position in the heavens. Baptism does not remind us of a dead man. No, it is a vivid reminder of a risen Saviour, One who is victorious in all that He set out to do. And this is the Christ which is over us as well.

These, then, are the verses before us.

#### **IV. Observations**

##### 1. Christians may (and most likely will) suffer as well-doers

This seems to be one obvious observation that we can make from this passage. As we have seen, Peter has repeatedly mentioned that Christians will suffer. And thus, they will suffer as doers-of-good, just as Christ did (cf. v. 17-18).

##### 2. Blessed be God, that Christ has suffered, the just for the unjust.

If it were not for the sacrifice of Christ, we would be sent to the lake of fire. We were unjust, as Peter says: *the just for the unjust*. And we are truly blessed, for Christ has died for us, being punished for us, in our stead. Blessed be God for His great mercy toward us.

##### 3. Sin will be punished.

This passage also is a testimony that sin will be punished. Sin was punished in the days of Noah. Sin was punished in the person of Christ. God did not just "forgive and forget about" these sins. Sins were punished: the just for the unjust. And thus we can see that God does punish sin.

##### 4. We are saved by the work of Christ as evidenced by the resurrection of Christ.

As we noted, the resurrection is the proof of the veracity of the gospel message. Christ did suffer and die for His people. And He was raised on the third day. Sins were atoned for. And the resurrection is the proof of the atonement. It is the seal that the atonement was obtained. And we are saved through this atonement.

##### 5. Christ is now and forever victorious

This is true, as evidenced by the exalted position that He has obtained. Blessed be God for the exalted Christ.

## **Baptism: its Mode and Method: Definition**

### **I. Review**

In May of last year, we began to examine, in an orderly fashion, the doctrine of baptism. In fact, this was not the first time we began to study this doctrine. In 1999, we actually began this series. But due to various issues, we never completed the study at that time. In any event, for the past year, we have been examining the doctrine of baptism from an exegetical standpoint. That is, we have been studying passage after passage to see how this doctrine was revealed and what the scriptures teach as regards this doctrine.

We began by looking at the historical revelation of the doctrine of baptism, from the time of John the Baptist, through the baptism of Christ and His disciples, continuing through the historical accounts found in the book of Acts and we concluded with the historical mentions of baptism found in the epistles. From these lessons we saw that baptism was of those that had made profession, that baptism was accompanied by confession and that there was a continuity within the ministries of John, Jesus and the apostles as regards baptism. For them, baptism was the same.

After this, we examined the theological teachings of the New Testament regarding baptism that were found in the epistles. We began with a careful examination of Romans 6.1-11, probably one of the most explicit statements regarding the meaning of baptism found in the New Testament. We continued with other theological statements found in the epistles: Galatians 3.27; Ephesians 4.5 and Colossians 2.12. We concluded, in our last lesson, with the rather difficult passage of Peter's, found in I Peter 3.21. In each of these passages we found that baptism was a sign of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and of the unity of the child of God with the sacrifice of Christ. This was plainly evident in each of the passages that we examined.

As of this date, we have two more sections remaining within our study. This evening, it is my intent to enter into the final section of our lesson regarding baptism--that concerning the proper mode of baptism. Hopefully, we will answer the question as to whether baptism is done by immersion, or sprinkling or pouring.

After this, I wish to conclude our series with a lesson concerning the New Covenant and who is a member of that covenant community. This is of vital importance to the discussion of baptism in that it defines for us, who are the proper subjects of baptism.

### **II. The Mode of Baptism: Introduction**

As it is practiced today, baptism is usually administered by some manner of placing of water upon the head of an individual. This is the practice of the Church of Rome, the Anglican Church (Episcopal Church), the Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church, the Methodist Church, a majority of charismatic churches and countless non-denominational assemblies. Thus, it would seem that the mode of baptism is pretty much settled. It is rare, in spiritual matters, to have such agreement across so many varied denominations and theological

movements, is it not? Yes it is. But numbers of adherents do not equal spiritual correctness. In fact, typically, the larger the number, the greater the likelihood of error. Personally, I would be very concerned if that to which I hold is also taught by the Catholic Church.

In the midst of the spiritual agreement regarding the mode of baptism that we have mentioned above, we could historically find one small sect that has doggedly refused to baptise in this manner. Historically since the Reformation, they have been called Baptists. Oddly enough, they are called Baptists when the whole of the theological world charges them with ignorance as regards the proper mode of baptism. It is their contention that baptism is not properly administered by the means mentioned above. No, for them, baptism is something else. For them, baptism is immersion--the complete plunging of the individual under the water. This and nothing else is baptism. Baptism is immersion. Yet, this is a minority view within the 21<sup>st</sup> century church. So, then, who is correct?

As you know, we are Baptists. We are Reformed or Protestant Baptists. We are those that hold to this "minority" view. And thus, it is my intent to show the biblical support for this "minority," albeit, biblical view.

### III. The Mode of Baptism: Lexical Meaning/Definition<sup>12</sup>

In the Greek, we find that there were several words used that were related to our discussion of baptism:

*Bapto*--to dip (4x),  
*baptizo*--to immerse (76x),  
*baptisma*--baptism (20x),  
*baptismov*--the results of baptism (3x)  
*baptistes*--the one so baptising (12x)  
 cf. *lbf*, to dip (LXX primarily translated *baptizo*).

A related word is *bathu*--deep, depth (whence *bath*, *bathysphere* - a vehicle for deep-sea exploration).

Thus, it is seen that the word has a specific semantic range of meaning, a range of meaning that is concerned with some medium, presumably a liquid, and the relation of an object that is placed or put into that medium.

Further, a cursory examination of the relevant lexicons of biblical Greek show that these words have this same range of meaning:

Lexicon	βαπτω	βαπτίζω
Abott-Smith	<i>to dip (in dye)</i>	<i>to immerse</i>
Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich	<i>to dip, dip in, dip into dye</i>	<i>to dip, immerse (plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm)</i>
Thayer	<i>to dip, dip in, immerse, to dye (color)</i>	<i>to dip, immerse, submerge, overwhelm</i>
Cremer	<i>to make wet by immersion, to dye by dipping</i>	<i>immersion, submersion</i>

<sup>12</sup> Please note: much of the following material is gleaned from the notes of Pastor Tom Lyon, of Providence Reformed Baptist Church, Tacoma WA, from a series of notes he had prepared concerning Chapter 29 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689). These notes were graciously sent to me upon discussion of the doctrine of baptism.



Kittel (TDNT)	<i>to dip in or under, to dye</i>	<i>to immerse, drown, sink (suffer shipwreck)</i>
Brown (DNNT)	<i>to dip</i>	<i>to immerse, submerge</i>
Moulton & Milligan (extra-biblical papyri)	<i>to dye or color</i>	<i>of a submerged boat, flooded</i>
Liddell & Scott (Classical)	<i>to dip, temper (metal), dye (cloth), glaze, silver or gild, the sinking of a ship</i>	<i>to dip, plunge, drown, sink (of ships), flood, soak</i>
Lewis & Short (Latin)		<i>a dipping in or under, a deluge</i>

Thus, it is shown that both of these words relate to the dipping or plunging of something into a liquid medium. In the case of baptism, this would refer to the dipping or plunging of a person into and under water.

Ancient secular usage of the Greek of the day concurs: *to dye* (cloth); *to sink* (ships); *to drown* (sailors), *to temper* (metals); *to glaze* (pottery) or *gild*; cf. metaph. *to bury* (in debt)  
Please note: Although *bapto* and *baptizo* are etymologically related, *bapto* is never used for the ordinance of baptism, and *baptizo* never means *to dye*.

Please note also: There exists no lexical data to the contrary. To translate *baptizo* with any English word but 'immerse' would be to violate the data of every standard lexicon.

In addition to the lexical data shown above, both theologians and commentators agree that *baptizo*, when used by 1<sup>st</sup> century Greek speaking individuals, was understood to mean immersion or dipping. Calvin states:

*"...the word "baptise" means to immerse, and it is clear that the rite of immersion was observed in the ancient church."<sup>13</sup>*

Further, Wayne Grudem, in his commentary on 1 Peter, while commenting upon the flood in Noah's day and of baptism's being compared to it, states the following:

*For if, as nearly certain, baptism when Peter wrote was by immersion (going completely under the water--note how incongruous the mention of 'removal of dirt from the body' would be if Peter thought that only a few drops of water were sprinkled on the head), then going down into the waters of baptism was a vivid symbol of going down into the grave in death. (Cf. 'We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death', Rom. 6.4).<sup>14</sup>*

Note just a few additional comments that illustrate this point<sup>15</sup>:

Luther: "The term *baptism* is a Greek word. It may be rendered immersion, as when we plunge something in water, that it may be entirely covered with water. And though that custom is now abolished among the generality, nevertheless, they (children) ought to be completely immersed, and immediately drawn out. *For the etymology of the word evidently requires it.*"

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin. The Institutes of the Christian Religion. Westminster Press. p. 1320. (Inst. IV. xv.19).

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Grudem. 1 Peter. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Inter-Varsity Press/Eerdmans. Pp. 162.

<sup>15</sup> taken from the notes of Pastor Tom Lyon, of Providence Reformed Baptist Church, Tacoma WA, from a series of notes he had prepared concerning Chapter 29 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689). Exact citations lacking.

Calvin: "From these words (John 3:23), it may be inferred, that baptism was administered by John and Christ, by plunging the whole body under water. Here we perceive how baptism was administered among the ancients; for they immersed the whole body in water."

Witsius: "It is certain, that both John and the disciples of Christ ordinarily used dipping: whose example was followed by the ancient church... It cannot be denied but the native signification of the words *baptein* and *baptizein* is to *plunge* or *dip*: so as to be altogether something more than *epipolazein*, to *float on the surface*; but less than *dunein*, to *go to the bottom* and *perish*... Nor are we to conceal that *there is a greater copiousness of signification, and fuller similitude between the sign and the thing signified, in immersion.*"

Warfield: "We may broadly say that the present diversity in baptismal usage is a growth of time; and that, should we move back within the first millennium of the church's life, we should find the whole Christian world in the ordinary use of triune immersion."

Schaff: "Respecting the form of baptism, the impartial historian is compelled by exegesis and history substantially to yield the point to the Baptists."

Thus, it has been shown that, lexically, the term *baptidzo* meant to immerse in the first century and that this fact has been recognised by various scholars from various ages. Although it is little known, this fact was recognised by the Westminster Assembly when they were meeting to write the Westminster Standards. When voting upon the wording of how baptism was to be mentioned within the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Assembly voted and passed the following:

*At the close of the debate the result of the vote was that by a majority of one it was decided that immersion may be regarded as valid baptism, but that baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling, that is, by affusion.*<sup>16</sup>

Approximately half of those there at that time saw that immersion was a valid expression of the term *baptidzo*.

Before we end our lesson this day, I would like to present one more piece of information for your consideration: The present day Greek Orthodox church, whose mother tongue has been and is Greek, has, to this day practiced immersion when the rite of baptism is practiced. Thus, those that ought to know the historical meaning of the word do practice the rite as it has been historically practiced.

#### **IV. Observations**

##### 1. To baptise is to immerse.

It is no mystery as to what the meaning of *baptizo* is--it means to immerse, to plunge into water. This is the uniform testimony of both the lexical data and the testimony of history. Scholars of various backgrounds hold that to baptise, in the first century, meant to immerse.

##### 2. It is theologically dishonest to state that baptism does not mean immerse when it does.

I do not mean to insult my paedobaptist brethren, but I am convinced that they err, nay, sin at this point. Regardless of their tradition, it is sinful to tell members of their congregation

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<sup>16</sup> Francis R. Beattie. The Presbyterian Standards. 2008. As published on the Bible Presbyterian Church website: [http://www.shortercatechism.com/resources/beattie/wsc\\_be\\_094-095.html](http://www.shortercatechism.com/resources/beattie/wsc_be_094-095.html)

that baptism never meant immerse when the uniform testimony of history is that this is the mode that was practiced by the early church. And of this sin, they are to repent.

3. We, as Baptists, ought not be ashamed of our heritage

There is a sense that some, after countless encounters with paedobaptists, would rather not mention that he is a Baptist, if for not other reason, than to keep the peace. However admirable peace-keeping may be, we as Baptists have nothing of which to be ashamed. We have the truth on our side. I realise that everyone lays claim to that axiom. However, as shown above, it is the Baptists that are lexically honest with both the meaning and the history of the word, *baptidzo*. It is others, not the Baptists, that have changed the meanings to suit their practice.

## Baptism: its Mode and Method: Definition (Part II)

### I. Review

Two weeks ago we began examining the third part of our study on baptism--the mode, or the manner in which baptism is physically carried out. For the better part of a year we have been examining exegetically the doctrine of baptism.

In our last lesson, we began by examining the definition of the word. Some, in hearing that we spent the better part of an entire sermon on the definition of baptism would think that we have wasted our time. Others would genuinely wonder how we could spend such time on the meaning of a word. "Baptism means baptism, doesn't it?" Thus, we can see, even in these objections, part of the problem.

As we noted in our last lesson, the meaning or definition of the word is what is at issue here. When first faced with translating the term *baptidzo*, the church did not translate this word, but rather it transliterated the word straight out of the Greek. Thus, without an explanation, the word would have no innate meaning in the translated language apart from that which would be given by the clergy. And this is exactly what happened. Time and time again the church was told that baptism means that which you see happening in the church. Thus, for the majority of Christendom, baptism came to mean sprinkling or pouring or some other means of placing water upon the head.

As we saw in our last lesson, the term *baptidzo*, and the related term *bapto*, mean something utterly different. Both of these terms relate to the immersing of an object into some type of medium, usually water. Further the metaphorical usages of the terms relate also to the total submersion of someone or something. Of this we will speak more momentarily. May it suffice at this time to mention that *baptidzo*, the Greek term for baptism was recognised as meaning "to immerse" by the church as a whole. And as we noted in our last lesson, this was the understanding of many scholars how baptism was practiced by the early church. We examined quotes from several men to this end. At this time I would like to mention again only two:

John Calvin stated:

*"...the word "baptise" means to immerse, and it is clear that the rite of immersion was observed in the ancient church."<sup>17</sup>*

Further, Wayne Grudem, in his commentary on 1 Peter, while commenting upon the flood in Noah's day and of baptism's being compared to it, states the following:

*For if, as nearly certain, baptism when Peter wrote was by immersion (going completely under the water--note how incongruous the mention of 'removal of dirt from the body' would be if Peter thought that only a few drops of water were sprinkled on the head), then going down into the waters of baptism was a vivid symbol of going down into the grave in death. (Cf. 'We were buried therefore with*

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<sup>17</sup> John Calvin. The Institutes of the Christian Religion. Westminster Press. p. 1320. (Inst. IV. xv.19).

him by baptism into death', Rom. 6.4).<sup>18</sup>

Although it is a little known fact to most paedo-baptists, *baptidzo* was recognised by some at the Westminster Assembly to refer to immersion. When voting upon the wording of how baptism was to be mentioned within the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Assembly voted 25-24 to not include immersion as a valid means of practicing this rite. Nearly half of those there at that time saw that immersion was a valid expression of the term *baptidzo*.

Thus, both lexically and historically, it can be shown that *baptidzo* means immersion.

This evening, I would like to take some time to examine other evidence that points to the fact that baptism, as practiced by the early church, was practiced by immersing an individual under the water.

## II. The Metaphorical or Figurative uses of the term "Baptism" and "Baptise"

As we noted last week and briefly in our introduction (above) the term *baptidzo* is used in what could be described as a metaphorical sense. That is, it is used to refer to some type of immersing that is not done in a literal medium, such as water. Although not common, this use is found at least 3x in the New Testament. Please note the following verses:

- 16 John answered, saying unto *them* all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:
- 17 Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

--Lk. 3.16-17

Here we find John the Baptist speaking of the coming of the Christ and of the ministry that He would have with the Holy Spirit. Note also how John speaks of the baptism of fire in v. 16. He further elaborates upon this baptism in v. 17, where Christ is described as the One who will purify his people, burning up the chaff and gather the wheat into the barn. Unlike the parable of the wheat and the tares elsewhere mentioned, it seems here that it is the purification of the elect that is in view. The chaff mentioned here is part of the wheat, whereas the tares were altogether different from the wheat. Thus, an immersion of purification is in view: a baptism of fire, to burn up all that is not wheat.

Note also the words of Christ:

- 49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?
- 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

--Lk. 12.49-50

Here we find Christ using the term baptism and baptised to refer to some yet as coming experience that he had undergo. He had to pass through this event. How could the terms "sprinkled" or "poured" have any relevancy at this point? Whatever it was to which Christ refers, it was an even that would envelop or engulf His entire person.

Lastly, we find Paul speaking of the baptism of Moses:

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<sup>18</sup> Wayne Grudem. 1 Peter, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Inter-Varsity Press/Eerdmans. Pp. 162.

- 1 ¶ Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;
- 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
- 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;
- 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

--I Cor. 10.1-4

What is spoken of here is the identification of the Israelites into the experience of being in the wilderness under Moses. They were immersed in this experience. And in going through these events, they were identified with Moses. Again, how could the term baptism have any relevancy if the term meant to sprinkle or to pour? What is the symbolism if baptism means sprinkling/pouring? There is none. The paedobaptists water down *baptidzo* by their insistence that baptism is sprinkling or pouring.

No, these three uses (and possibly also I Cor. 12.13) refer to the immersion of one into some experience and thusly being identified by this experience.

## II. The Symbolic uses of the term "Baptism" and "Baptise"

Although we have examined previously these passages, I would like to revisit two passages on baptism that also point to the mode. They are Romans 6.1- and Colossians 2.12.

- 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
- 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection:

--Rom. 6.3-5

- 11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:
- 12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
- 13 ¶ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;
- 14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

--Col. 2.11-14

We have said much concerning these two passages already. But we must note at this point of what it is that baptism symbolises: immersion in and emergence from death. In so being united with Christ by His work upon the Cross, we are united in His death, burial and resurrection. And this is what our baptism symbolises, that we also participate in His death.

The paedobaptists, at this point, are fond of pointing out that the allusion or type that can be found in baptism points to ceremonial cleansing, with such cleansing being found in the Old Testament law. Granted, the death of Christ is the ground for our cleansing before God. This is not, however, what baptism portrays. Baptism, rather than symbolising a cleansing or purifying (as the paedobaptists assert) we contend that baptism represents His death and burial. Please note: Neither pouring nor sprinkling can hope to convey such information.

Further, the waters of baptism, rather than representing ceremonial cleansing (as in the Old Testament) rather represents being buried with him under the ground. Our being baptised thus refers to our union with Him in this matter. Thus, the water represents dirt of burial not the blood of cleansing.

#### **IV. Observations**

##### 1. To baptise is to immerse.

We made this observation in our last lesson. Again, it is valid tonight. It is no mystery as to what the meaning of *baptizo* is--it means to immerse, to plunge into water. Two weeks ago we noted that this was the uniform testimony of both the lexical data and the testimony of history. This evening, we saw that this is the manner in which the word *baptidzo* is used in the scriptures in both its metaphorical sense and in its symbolic sense. There is no validity to the false meanings that have been given to *baptidzo*, that are promulgated by our paedobaptist brethren. Even though they may worship the same Christ, they dishonour Him in speaking and teaching that which He did not. To baptise is to immerse.

##### 2. It is theologically dishonest to state that baptism does not mean immerse when it does.

Again, we made this observation last time as well. As I said before, I do not mean to insult my paedobaptist brethren, but I am convinced that they err, nay, sin at this point. Regardless of their tradition, it is sinful to tell members of their congregation that baptism never meant immerse when the uniform testimony of history is that this is the mode that was practiced by the early church. And of this sin, they are to repent.

##### 3. It is improper to use a type that the scripture does not recognise

This observation is in reference to the paedobaptists linking baptism to ritual or ceremonial cleansing. Nowhere in the word of God do we find the apostles making this link. Yet this is the standard explanation of the meaning of baptism by paedobaptists. Types are very serious items. There are only a handful of types that are recognised by the authors of the New Testament. To go beyond their understanding is dangerous at best. Countless errors through the ages of church history were supported by erroneous types and figures. Thus, I observe, it is improper to use a type or figure that the scripture does not recognise.

##### 4. The paedobaptist understanding of baptism vacates the true meaning out of baptism and opens the door for the baptism of unregenerate church members.

For the sake of their doctrine, the paedobaptists have taught that baptism symbolises cleaning. Further, they teach that this cleansing is to extend to each member of the covenant community. Thus, children ought to be baptised. But this is not the scriptural practice. Nor is this the proper meaning of baptism. One error begets another. Is it any wonder that generation after generation of paedobaptist denominations have difficulty with an unregenerate church membership? Is it any wonder that these churches sooner or later fall into error?

## **Baptism: its Mode and Method: Definition (Part III)**

### **I. Review**

In our last two lessons we have been examining the definition of baptism. We examined the lexical use of the word from various sources. We found, upon examination, that the term baptise, *baptidzo* in the Greek, means to immerse. We also noted that the church, as expressed through various theologians, acknowledged that baptism, as it was practiced by the earliest Christians, was by immersion. This, then, was the main part of the body of our lesson three weeks ago.

Last week (two weeks ago we did not look at baptism) we examined other uses of the term baptise. First, we examined the metaphorical or figurative uses of the term. Although not common, we did note that the Bible does have a handful of figurative uses of the term. In each of these, we noted that the intent was to show the *total immersion* of someone into something. One example should suffice. Note again the words of Christ:

49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?  
50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!  
--Lk. 12.49-50

Here we saw Christ using the term *baptism* and *baptised* to refer to some yet as coming experience that he had to undergo. He had to pass through this event, an event into which he would be submersed, into which He would be totally immersed. As we can see from the context, this cannot refer to water baptism. Yet, it was something into which He would be submerged, immersed. And, as we noted in our last lesson, how could the terms "sprinkled" or "poured" have any relevancy at this point to describe the utter depths of the experience that He was about to undergo? They could not. And it is ridiculous (nay possibly even blasphemous) to suggest otherwise.

We also examined the symbolic uses of the word. As used by Paul in Romans 6 and Colossians 2, baptism symbolised the total identification of the child of God with the death, burial and resurrection of the Christ. Again, this is something that sprinkling or pouring does not do. In fact, in stating that baptism is properly administered by sprinkling or pouring actually devalues and destroys the biblical imagery that is expressed by Paul that is associated with baptism. This, then was our lesson last week.

### **III. The Mode of Baptism: Relevant Passages Regarding the "Logistics" of Baptism**

This evening, I wish to look at what I have entitled the "logistics" of baptism. Aside from the very weighty lexical data that points to the fact that baptism was practiced by immersion, we also have logistical data found in the word of God that point to the fact that those so baptised were immersed.

Before we begin, I wish to make a statement regarding the term "logistics". Logistics, in its simplest expression, refers to location. Thus, when I refer to "logistics" in the course of our study this evening, I am referring to the location of either the one so baptising, or of the



location of the one that was baptised. I am doing this because the scriptures do give us "logistical" data that describes the process of baptism. Thus, we shall begin.

In doing a survey of this kind, many would be surprised to find that for as many times that baptism is mentioned within the word of God, that there are only two recorded baptisms found in its pages: the baptism of Christ and the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. But even from this limited data we can find relevant information regarding the practice of baptism.

I would like to examine the baptism of Christ first. And in that three of the Gospels record this same event, I would like to examine them together.

- 13 ¶ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.  
14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?  
15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.  
16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:  
17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.  
--Mt. 3.13-17

- 9 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.  
10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:  
11 And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.  
--Mk. 1.9-11

- 21 ¶ Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,  
22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.  
--Lk. 3.21-22

From even a cursory reading of these passages, one can see that they are very similar in content. Each describes the baptism of Jesus by John in some detail. But upon careful study, we can find that each of these authors do vary the account slightly. But whether in their agreement or in the differences, we find that the biblical record before presents a view of baptism that is best understood by immersion. Please note the following:

--that both Matthew and Mark record for us that Jesus, having been baptised, "came up out of the water". Both of the passages are the translation of the term, *anabaino*, to go up, ascend. Thus, this either refers to Jesus emerging from being immersed, or to His coming up out of the water after baptism. In either case, there seems to be little sense of Jesus being in the water if, as our paedobaptist brethren state, Jesus was only "along side the water", or, "at the water's edge. The term *anabaino* seems to refer to something more.

--Both the Matthew and Mark passage state that Jesus came "out of" or "from" the water. This is translation of the small Greek preposition, *ek*. This, preposition when referring to physical movement, refers to movement away from something. Thus, it refers to Jesus coming up out of the water, or of His moving away from the water after His baptism. Thus, it appears that the baptism of Christ was in this water, in that He came up out of the water after being baptised.

--Although not stated by Matthew and Like, Mark records for us the following statement: ...that Jesus...was baptized of John in Jordan. Literally, Mark states here that Jesus was baptised by John *into* the Jordan. This is a translation of the small Greek preposition *eis*, which can mean movement towards or into something. Thus, it seems that Mark is telling us that Christ was baptised into the Jordan, not by (means of) the Jordan.

If we examine the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch we find the same use of Greek prepositions:

- 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?
- 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.
- 36 And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?
- 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
- 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.
- 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.
- 40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

--Acts 8.34-40

In v. 38, we find both the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip going down into (*eis*) the water. Luke here uses the same Greek preposition as Mark did earlier to describe them entering the water. Further, Luke uses the term *katabaino*, to descend, go down, to describe their motion.

In v. 39, we find the motion is now reversed. They ascend (*anabaino*) from or out of (*ek*) the water. From this narrative, it seems that to be baptised by Philip, the eunuch went down into the water and then come up out of it again. To sprinkle or to pour seems not to satisfy the terms here.

In addition, would not this Ethiopian official had water with him? This was not a lowly or insignificant man. Clearly he would have carried with him enough water for the voyage across this dry and deserted portion of the trip. To sprinkle or to pour requires very little water, especially as it is practiced today. Thus, it is surprising then that if sprinkling or pouring were in view that they had to stop and find water, get out, descend to the water and then come up again. No, this narrative is only satisfied when the term baptism is understood as immersion.

In summary, it seems that in both of these cases of baptism that the subject that was to be baptised had to descend into the water, was baptised and then they went up from the water. The only scenario that does fair service to the logistics of the cases is that each was immersed in the water. This best explains these narratives and does not seem to violate the meaning of the vocabulary used by the holy authors.

Before we leave this discussion of the logistics of baptism, I would like to look at one more passage that speaks of the location of baptism--the geographical location. Please turn to John 3.22-24.

- 22 ¶ After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.
- 23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.
- 24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

--John 3.22-24

What we find here is a brief statement that could be almost overlooked as an obscure geographic reference. But we need to note that John the apostle gives a reason for this brief geographical note: *...there was much water there:....* For some reason, it was noted that John was baptizing in a place where there was much water. This would seem to indicate that "much water" was needed to accommodate baptism. And if baptism is understood as immersion (in accord with the lexical data) then "much water" would be needed to properly baptise.

Along these lines, we should also note that, when referring to baptism, we do not have any record of a person being so baptised in a place where there was not "much water". If baptism were correctly practiced by sprinkling or pouring, then baptisms could take place almost anywhere. Yet this is not the biblical testimony of baptism. Baptism, when it is described, took place where there was "much water" and no place else. Thus, it would seem that much water was needed. Again, immersion is the scenario that best fits the biblical data.

### III. Ancient Church Usage

I would like to examine one more passage that relates to the practice of baptism. However, this passage is not in the word of God. Rather, this is a second generation document, written sometime in the second century, after the passing of the apostles. Although the passage is not scripture, it does give us one of the earliest glimpses into the early church's understanding of the practice of baptism. The passage is found in *The Teaching of the Apostles*. In this book, we find instruction given to the church as to how to carry out various items related to the church. One such item is baptism:

But concerning baptism, thus shall ye baptize. Having first recited all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water. But if thou has not living water, then baptize in other water; and if thou art not able in cold, then in warm. But if thou hast neither, then pour water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let him that bapizeth and him that is baptised fast, and any others who are able; and thou shalt order him that is baptized to fast a day or two before. <sup>19</sup>

Note that two different words are used in this passage--one for *baptize* and one for *pour*. When there was enough water to baptise, they were to immerse. When there was not enough water to do so, then and only then were they to "pour on the head...". Apparently, baptism and pouring were two different things in the mind of the author, and pouring was only to be done when there was not enough water to baptise (immerse). Thus, it would seem that there was no confusion in the early church as to what was the proper mode of baptism--*it was immersion*.

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<sup>19</sup> *The Apostolic Fathers*. Ed, by J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer. 1987. p. 232

Granted, they did admit pouring as a valid form of baptism, but that does not supersede the instruction of the word of God. Even from this passage, it can be seen that this work was adding to baptism (eg--fasting). But the truth remains that the early church understood that baptism was immersion.

#### **IV. Why then do the paedobaptists insist that baptism is not immersion?**

After all that has been said and done in this study, one may ask: *Why then do the paedobaptists insist that baptism is not immersion?* This is a hard question and really beyond the scope of our exegetical study. Frankly, I think that it has something to do with their view of the covenant and the covenant community being a "mixed multitude". Further, they see that baptism is now the sign of this New Covenant. And if this is so, how then does one immerse infants? I realise that this may be speculation on my part, but I can find no biblical rationale for denying the clear teaching of the scriptures that baptism is immersion. Even many of the Westminster divines understood that baptism could be correctly done by immersion.

Suffice it to say at this point, is that baptising by sprinkling or pouring is going beyond the scope of the word of God, and the one so doing is sinning against the God they claim to serve.

#### **V. Observations**

##### 1. Baptism is immersion

No one can legitimately state that we, who baptise by immersion, do not baptise as did the apostolic church. Baptism is immersion. Lexically this is true. Historically this is true. And this accords with the practice of the early church. All the data agree--baptism is immersion

##### 2. Baptism, to be properly administered, is to be done by immersion

No one can legitimately state that we, who baptise by immersion, do not baptise as did the apostolic church. Baptism is immersion

##### 3. The one so being baptised by sprinkling or pouring has not been baptised after the practice of the New Testament church

There is no recorded instance in the New Testament, nor in the early church fathers, of baptism being practiced by sprinkling or pouring. I do not see how one so baptised could ever think himself properly baptised. If the regulative principle has any bearing in worship, would we not have to agree that we ought to baptise in the same manner that the apostles did? To do otherwise would be to be adding to the word of God. And this is not something that God takes lightly. Just as Nadab and Abihu thought that they were presenting a pleasing offering before God and were punished for their arrogance and failure to treat God holy, those so baptising are also sinning against God by not following the word of God.

## **Baptism: One Final Consideration--Membership in the Covenant Community**

### **I. Review**

This evening we conclude a study that we began just over a year ago. In the first week of May of last year, we began to examine the doctrine of baptism from an exegetical standpoint, studying passage after passage to see how this doctrine was revealed and what the scriptures teach as regards this doctrine.

We began by looking at the historical revelation of the doctrine of baptism, from the time of John the Baptist, through the baptism of Christ and His disciples, continuing through the historical accounts found in the book of Acts and we concluded with the historical mentions of baptism found in the epistles. From these lessons we saw that baptism was of those that had made profession, that baptism was accompanied by confession and that there was a continuity within the ministries of John, Jesus and the apostles as regards baptism. For them, baptism was the same.

After this, we examined the theological teachings of the New Testament regarding baptism that were found in the epistles. We began with a careful examination of Romans 6.1-11, probably one of the most explicit statements regarding the meaning of baptism found in the New Testament. We continued with other theological statements found in the epistles: Galatians 3.27; Ephesians 4.5 and Colossians 2.12. We concluded, in our last lesson, with the rather difficult passage of Peter's, found in I Peter 3.21. In each of these passages we found that baptism was a sign of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and of the unity of the child of God with the sacrifice of Christ. This was plainly evident in each of the passages that we examined.

Lastly, we have been examining the mode of baptism as it was practiced by Christ and the apostles. We began by examining the definition of the words used to describe baptism and we noted how each word used to describe this activity had some reference to the submersion of someone or something into some medium (typically water). The lexical data show that baptism and its related terms all refer to immersion. Baptism is immersion. We also noted how this view was (for the most part) the uniform testimony of Reformed theologians until recent times. We also examined other uses of these words, both figurative and symbolic, and found that again, immersion is in view. We also examined the logistics related to baptism, noting how the Greek prepositions used to describe also point to an activity that occurred *in water* and not just with water. And lastly, we read a passage from one of the earliest recorded passages of the early church, describing how baptism was practiced at the turn of the first century--by immersion. And so thus, our examination of the biblical mode of baptism came to a close.

There is one more item that we need to address, as Baptists, that relates to the issue of baptism. It is the matter of who is a member of the covenant community? For this is the question that separates the Baptists from those who insist that children and infants are to be baptised as well.

## II. The New Covenant: Hebrews 8.6-12

This evening, we are concluding our study concerning baptism with a look at the New Covenant, for it is at this point that we differ with our paedobaptist brethren as regards baptism. In fact, it is this point that more deeply divides us than does the issue of mode or of meaning of baptism. Covenant membership is at the core of the dispute between Reformed Baptists and all other of our Reformed brethren. And thus, we need to examine this issue. Please turn with me to Hebrews 8, where we find a statement of the New Covenant:

- 6 ¶ But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.
- 7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.
- 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:
- 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
- 10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:
- 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.
- 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

--Heb. 8.6-12

From this passage we can see the following as regards the New Covenant:

### Verse 6

In v. 6 we find that *Christ is the Mediator of this Covenant*. As such, Christ stands in a special relationship as regards this covenant and its members. Each member, in view of the covenant and its mediator, stands in a special relationship with God. Further, each member is in a unique relationship with both God and with Christ, as a result of His mediatory work. Thus, those that are members of this covenant are in a special relationship with Christ as well in light of this mediatory work. That this is true can be seen in the practice of the Lord's Supper, where the shedding of the blood is seen as the blood of the Mediator (cf. Lk. 22.20; I Cor. 11.25).

### Verse 8

In v. 8 we see that *God was the initiator of this New Covenant*. This is not the result of a cooperative effort between God and man. No, the new covenant is a covenant that was instituted by God. He is its author; he is its ratifier. As such, we can see that this covenant is a unilateral covenant, that is, God is the one who brings the aspects of the covenant to pass. And this is what He did in Christ, the Mediator (cf. v. 6).

We also find in v. 8, that this new covenant is a covenant with the house of Israel and Judah. That is, it is a covenant that the LORD has made with His covenant people. It is not a

“wide open” covenant, nor open to any or all. No, it is with the elect people of God. And we find elsewhere that this is the mystery that was hidden from ages past, that the gentiles do have part in this covenant community. This is the thrust of Paul’s words in Eph. 2.11ff, that the gentiles have been added to the covenant community. But we must never forget that this covenant community is an elect people, as shown here. We, as gentiles, are in this new covenant, because we have been added to the “Israel of God”. And thus, we see the folly of the dispensationalists in stating that there is a distinction between the Israel of God and the church of God. God’s people have always been one, as they are now.

#### Verse 9

In v. 9, we have a statement that this covenant is inherently different than the first. Thus, we have the author of Hebrews stating that the first covenant had faults (cf. v. 7). We must note at this point that the faults mentioned here are not with the covenant itself, per se, but with the members of that covenant. The law could never bring life, to those that were spiritually dead. Under the new covenant, the LORD would place His laws within the people (cf. v. 10).

#### Verse 10

In v. 10, we find that *the LORD was active in both instituting and carrying out the covenant*. The LORD is the active one in this new covenant. He puts His own laws in their minds and writes them upon their hearts. Here we find the internal nature of the new covenant. By His working the new covenant was a spiritual covenant, working new things within the life of those in this covenant. Further, this verse describes for us the *spiritual nature* of the members of the new covenant. One was not part of this covenant community without this internal working of God.

Further, *God claims these as His own*. God states that he will be their God and they His people. Those, in whom He has worked, are His people. Here we have a picture of the *intimate nature* of the new covenant. He is the God of those who have had this His divine hand scribe His laws within them. How could it be said that one was part of this covenant community when the Lord had not so worked upon him?

#### Verse 11

In v. 11, we find another description of the members of the covenant community--*the members of the new covenant know the LORD*. No longer will each tell his neighbour or brother to know the LORD. And why? Because of the working of God, they already know God. The new covenant was not a “mixed” community as was the old covenant. No, those in the new covenant, because of the working of God (v. 10) *know the LORD*. “They shall all know Me...” states the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet. This is *the* characteristic of the new covenant member--they all know the LORD.

#### Verse 12

In v. 12, we find another characteristic of the members of the new covenant community--*the members of the new covenant are forgiven members*. Just as they all knew God (in v. 11), in v. 12, we find that those that are a part of the new covenant are forgiven. God,

through Christ, has forgiven all their sins. The Mediator (v. 6) has undertaken for them. There is now no basis for judgment against them. Each member of the covenant community stands before God justified, and they do so as a result of the work of the Mediator and the LORD Himself. New covenant members are forgiven members.

This, then, is the New Covenant:

- it is a covenant with a Divine Mediator
- it is a covenant that was initiated and ratified by God
- it is a covenant where the members have the law of God within them, written by God Himself
- it is a covenant where each of the members knows God
- it is a covenant where each of the members is forgiven

### *Summary*

Now, with this being true, what can be said as it relates to baptism and the New Covenant? Is it proper that those be baptised into the new covenant community when they are not forgiven? Is it proper that we baptise those into the new covenant community that do not know the LORD? Is it proper that we baptise those into the new covenant community that know nothing of the Mediator of this covenant? Is it proper that we baptise unbelieving individuals into this community that know nothing of the laws of God?

The answers are self evident. Those that would do so (eg--paedobaptists) are declaring to the world, nay, even the heavens, that they do not understand the spiritual nature of the new covenant when they baptise infants and unbelieving children into this covenant community. Further, they fail to discern who exactly is a member of the covenant community, in so baptising. Their judgement is just. Is it any wonder that such churches have typically had no more than three to four faithful generations within their movements? And how else could it be so, when countless individuals are told and instructed that they are members of the covenant community when in fact they are not?

No, it is immoral to knowingly baptise those into the covenant community that have no evidence of membership of the new covenant. I do acknowledge that this does happen from time to time within the Baptist community as well. But by the grace of God, this is the exception, not the rule, as it is within the paedobaptist community.

### **III. Observations**

#### 1. Baptism is for members of the new covenant

This can be seen from the verses above. The new covenant community was not a mixed community. And it is not to be so today. Those that make it so are sowing the seeds of their own destruction.

#### 2. The new covenant is a spiritual covenant.

This, too, can be seen from the verses above. Those in the new covenant are there because of the working of God within their lives. It is a divine work that one has the laws of God placed within them. It is a spiritual work, wrought by the Spirit within the lives of those so chosen. As this relates to baptism, baptism is a public declaration that the one so baptised is part of that spiritual community. Baptism does not make one part of the covenant



community, God does.

*3. Behold the merciful nature of the new covenant*

As we have seen, the new covenant is a spiritual covenant. Those members have had the hand of God working within their lives. And this implies mercy. As we have seen elsewhere, those in whom God has worked were dead in their sins prior to His working. And it was only by the mercy of God that any change ever took place within their lives. Baptism is a sign of this merciful, gracious working of God, that He has caused us to share in the death of the Mediator and that He has caused us to know Him forevermore. Amen and Amen.

## **Baptism: A Brief Look at the Relationship Between the Baptist and the Paedobaptist.**

### **I. Review**

Two weeks ago, I preached what I thought was the last lesson on baptism in our series on baptism that had begun just over a year ago. It was fully my intent to preach this evening an introduction to our next lesson and series of sermons. Upon recent reflection, however, we need to examine at least one more item.

There are many aspects of this topic that we have not addressed. We could spend weeks examining the supposed biblical basis for paedobaptism and examining the logical arguments of the paedobaptists. We could have also examined some of the serious defects of their teaching and of the detrimental outworkings of their system. These all could have been done to our benefit.

However, I felt that such excurses would be beyond the scope of our study. Our study was to be an *exegetical* examination of the scriptures as regards the doctrine of baptism, to examine what the scriptures stated regarding this subject of baptism and what conclusions could be drawn from the data examined.

And this we have done.

And in so doing, we have shown, at every turn, that the Bible teaches the Baptist understanding of the concept of baptism:

--that baptism was of those that had made profession, that baptism was accompanied by confession and that there was a continuity within the ministries of John, Jesus and the apostles as regards baptism. At no point was baptism seen to be of infants or of those that had not made profession or had not confessed their sins.

--that baptism was a sign of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and of the unity of the child of God with the sacrifice of Christ (cf. Romans 6.1-11; Galatians 3.27; Ephesians 4.5 and Colossians 2.12).

--that baptism is immersion. This is the lexical definition of the word, and this definition accords with the etymological data surrounding the word *baptizo*. Baptism, as practiced by the early church was acknowledged to be immersion by Protestant theologians until recently. The Greek prepositions used to describe baptism also point to an activity that occurred *in water* and not just with water. And lastly, the early church itself recorded for all posterity its understanding of baptism, describing the manner in which baptism was practiced at the turn of the first century--by immersion.

From all that we have seen I must state, although it may be offensive to some: the Baptist understanding of baptism is the biblical understanding of baptism. I am sure that if questioned, the Reformed paedobaptist would most likely make a similar statement

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<sup>20</sup> sermon was altered/reworked as to content in December 2008

concerning the Baptist view of baptism that I have enunciated. However, we cannot deny that which we see the scriptures clearly declaring.

## II. The Baptist and the Paedobaptist

That having been said, and it is all true, we need to examine the paedobaptist himself. How ought the Baptist view the Paedobaptist?

In light of all that has been brought forth, some may think that I am advocating a most harsh treatment of the one so teaching the paedobaptist view. And in practice, this has been the stance of some within the Baptist community down through the centuries. Further, this also has been the view of numerous paedobaptists on the other side of the argument. One does not need to examine the pages of history long to find numerous instances of discrimination and mistreatment of Baptists by paedobaptists.

Again, the question must be asked, "How ought the Baptist view the Paedobaptist?"

As important as the doctrine of baptism is, *there is no warrant for such actions, on either side of the issue.*

How, then, ought the Baptist view the Paedobaptist?

Please turn with me to the book of Philippians, where I would like to examine a few verses in relation to this issue and that may have application regarding this question.

In the first place, I would like to state: ***The Reformed Paedobaptist has a participation or an interest in the gospel.*** Note Paul's words in v. 5 of chapter 1:

- 3 ¶ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
- 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,
- 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;
- 6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

--Phil. 1.3-6

Paul recognised that the Philippians were in the fellowship of the Christ. Some were converted through the ministry of Paul. Others may have been converted later, through the ministry of those unto whom Paul had ministered. In either case, Paul recognised and knew that those to whom he wrote were fellow heirs in the gospel. And how did he know this? It was through their profession as regards the Christ and through the example of their lives. They professed belief in the Son of God. They held that He was the Christ, the source of their salvation. And they lived lives consistent with this profession. And so do the Reformed Paedobaptists.

We need to note, that although baptism is a very important and biblical issue, *baptism is not a cardinal issue or doctrine.* What I mean is this, that the doctrine of baptism ought not be something that separate brethren from fellowshiping in Christ and worshiping our God and Father. For the apostles, issues that were of first importance centred around the person and the work of Christ. Thus, anyone denying His deity was treated as an unbeliever. The church did not ever have a place for the Gnostics within their fellowship. It was by the doctrine of the Christ that a person

was judged. And so ought it be today.

If one comes to us denying the deity of Christ, we cannot have Christian fellowship with that one. Many today wish to count the Mormons as part of the greater Christian community. This can never be done, for the Mormon church denies the very deity of Christ that is a cornerstone of the Christian faith. Likewise, if one comes to us, declaring a Christ, although divine, that accomplished a work other than that which the scriptures declare, such a one is found declaring a false gospel, a gospel of a false christ. With such as these, we cannot have fellowship, for they blaspheme against Christ Himself, declaring doctrines that Christ himself never taught, and denying Christ's own words, through their teaching.

But this is something that the Reformed Paedobaptist does not do. The Reformed Paedobaptist agrees with the Reformed Baptist as regards the importance of the gospel, as regards the vital nature of the doctrines of grace, as regards the importance of the unconditional nature of the grace of God. The doctrine of paedobaptism denies none of these cardinal doctrines.

And again I state: *The Reformed Paedobaptist has a participation or an interest in the gospel.*

Secondly, ***both the Reformed Baptist and the Reformed Paedobaptist are involved in the gospel ministry.*** Note the situation found in vv. 15-17 of chapter 1 of the book of Philippians:

- 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
- 15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:
- 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:
- 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.
- 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

--Phil. 1.14-18

In this situation, various individuals were preaching the gospel while Paul was in prison. Some were doing so from hurtful motives, hoping to bring Paul grief. Others were preaching from a sincere desire to see the truth of the gospel furthered. Two vastly different motives. Two vastly different ministries. Yet one glorious result--the furtherance of the gospel. And for this Paul praises God.

As regards the gospel, the same is true today of the Reformed Baptist and the Reformed Paedobaptist. In fact, as compared with the verses above, both the Reformed Baptist and the Paedobaptist are not like the two groups above, where one is preaching from impure motives. No. Both the Reformed Baptist and the Paedobaptist are those that are preaching "from good will"<sup>21</sup>. They are both serving God, faithfully preaching the gospel of sovereign grace.

Thirdly, ***both the Reformed Baptist and the Reformed Paedobaptist hold to the same or similar doctrinal standards.*** Historically, the Reformed Baptists of

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<sup>21</sup> Unless one is found preaching a false gospel all the while claiming to be Reformed. Today this is true in many Reformed circles and denominations. Many claim to be Reformed, all the while denying cardinal doctrines of the faith through teachings such as "Federal Vision", the "New Perspectives on Paul", etc. All such teaching is heretical and is a denial of the biblical gospel. For further information regarding these erroneous teachings, one may consult the Trinity Foundation website (<http://trinityfoundation.org>) or the website of the Protestant Reformed Church (<http://www.prca.org>).

the 21<sup>st</sup> century hold to the 2<sup>nd</sup> London Confession of Faith, commonly known as the 1689 Confession of Faith. This document was purposely modelled after the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Savoy Declaration with a view to showing their Reformed brethren in the British Isles that doctrinally the Particular or Strict Baptists of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were similar to the other Reformed believers of the day. For most Reformed Baptists, they know and appreciate the Reformed heritage that they share with their Presbyterian brethren.

Lastly, ***both the Reformed Baptist and the Reformed Paedobaptist will be a cause of praise unto the Lord on the last day.*** In Matt. 25 we find a picture of the final judgment, with the sheep being separated on the right and the goats on the left. There is no mention of any further subdivisions within either group. At that point, Baptist or Presbyterian will mean nothing. The Baptists, like their faithful Paedobaptist brethren, will be a cause of praise unto the Lord, a testimony of His faithful working within the people of God. On that day, men like Calvin and Knox will be praising God along side men like Gill and Pink. No distinction. No divisions. No animosity or antagonism caused by doctrinal differences. No, the people of God will be one, even as He is one with His people (cf. Eph 5.22-32, noting esp vv. 31-32).

### Summary

Thus, we find that there is a unity and a commonality in and through Christ that binds both the Reformed Baptist and the Reformed Paedobaptist in one body. Although we as Baptists may have significant and serious differences with the Reformed Paedobaptists, differences that cannot be glossed over and ignored. We are, however, first and foremost, brethren in Christ. By His grace, may we never forget this truth.

This truth is beautifully exemplified in an article by Pastor Chris Coleborn, a pastor with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. The article is a look at the relationships and the cooperation that existed between the various segments of the Reformed church of Europe from the 1500s to the 1700s. Pastor Coleborn notes the following as regards the unity of the brethren at that time, providing numerous examples of the unity so expressed<sup>22</sup>:

*We may...note that the various Reformed Churches had, and showed, a brotherly esteem and regard for one another for what they held in common, and of their desire for contact and unity in the essentials, in spite of the differences they had...*

*Recall too how the various Reformers from the different Reformed Churches visited one another & often served in one another's Churches. There was a flow of men and ideas between the various branches of the Reformed Churches...*

*Let us note too, how the different branches of the Reformed Church, for all of their differences, consulted with one another on their actions and problems, such as advice on the acceptance and approval of their particular Confessional Standards...*

*The various Reformed Churches prayed for, and had a concern for, one another in their trials and life as Churches...*

*When one Reformed Church was not able to train its ministers, another would come to its assistance and help in the training of its ministers. This was so, even when there were serious*

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<sup>22</sup> "The Relationship Of The Reformed Churches Of Scotland, England, Western & Eastern Europe". Pastor Chris Coleborn. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia website. <http://www.epc.org.au/historical/the-relationship-of-the-reformed-churches-of-scotland-england-western-eastern-e-4.html>

*differences on the matter of worship....*

Further, Coleborn notes that even with their differences, they walked in unity:

*We can learn a valuable lesson, I believe, in how we ought to relate to one another from the understanding the various branches of the Reformed Churches had in how to manage their differences.*

*It is striking that the various branches of the Reformed Churches did not major on the differences they had at the cost of the broad faith they had in common. The truths they particularly held in common, were their view of revelation & authority, God, Christ's Person and work, the nature of man and salvation.*

*However, this does not mean they did not think their differences unimportant. They saw all truth as sacred and important, and any differences were treated seriously and with care and respect. There was none of that modern notion around today of sacrificing differences under the guise of a mere formal unity of the Churches.*

The article continues on in this vein and I highly recommend it.

Sadly, however, this unity is a commodity that is sorely lacking within the Reformed movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At present, I am aware of only two examples, at the institutional level, of such cooperation between Reformed Baptists and some other Reformed denomination.

The most notable instance is the cooperation that presently exists in the training of men for the ministry between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America. Some years ago, the OPC agreed to cooperate in the training of men for the Baptist pastorate within Reformed Baptist churches, creating a chair for Reformed Baptist studies at Westminster West in CA.

Another example is a Reformed Baptist pastor being asked to teach New Testament Greek at a Bible Presbyterian Seminary.

These are admirable. But they also are a start, albeit a small start.

### *Conclusion*

What we have just seen are numerous examples of the unity that was expressed by Reformed brethren of the 1500s to the 1700s--a time when the Reformed faith flourished. And may we, both Baptist and Paedobaptist, walk in unity in this time when the gospel is assaulted on almost every front, from both without the Reformed movement and even from within.

May we, by His grace, aspire to the unity in Christ of which Pastor Coleborn so eloquently writes, and which is a manifestation of the true spiritual unity that exists between the Reformed Baptist and the Reformed Paedobaptist.

I would like to conclude with a reminder of the unity that exists among the brethren, Baptist and Paedobaptist, alike:

**Psalm 133**

- A Song of degrees of David.
- 1 Behold, how good a thing it is,  
and how becoming well,  
Together such as brethren are  
in unity to dwell!
  
  - 2 Like precious ointment on the head,  
that down the beard did flow,  
Ev'n Aaron's beard, and to the skirts,  
did of his garments go.
  
  - 3 As Hermon's dew, the dew that doth  
on Sion' hills descend:  
For there the blessing God commands,  
life that shall never end.

--The Scottish Psalter

*And thus, by the grace of God, may we walk and serve God together. To His glory.*

Amen and Amen.