

Was Baptism In Paul's Time Different From Today?

It is amazing the lengths to which men will go to teach that the Word of God does not now mean what it once did. Prejudice, bias, and man-made traditions influence many folks far more than God's inspired Word. It is sad that people can become so blind to the sacred Scriptures that they claim to follow.

In commenting on Romans 6:4, William Barclay says:

Now, when we try to understand what Paul goes on to say, we must remember that baptism in his time was different from what it commonly is today. It was adult baptism. That is not to say that the New Testament is opposed to infant baptism, but infant baptism is the result of the Christian family, and the Christian family could hardly be said to have come into being as early as the time of Paul. A man came to Christ as an individual in the early Church, often leaving his family behind.

First, the validity of Bible baptism has nothing to do with the period of time in which the apostle Paul lived. New Testament baptism is **only** for those who believe (Mark 16:16), and infants cannot believe in God and His Word.

There *is* a sense in which baptism was different in Paul's time to what it is today. In Paul's day, people understood that they had to repent from their sins (Luke 13:3) in order for their baptism to be valid. People were taught that they could not **live** in their sins and be pleasing unto God; thus, the act of baptism does not make sinful things right (Col. 3:5-10). All understood baptism to be an immersion, and the apostles never suggested sprinkling someone for convenience' sake.

Second, the New Testament is indeed opposed to infant baptism! There is no Scriptural authority for infant baptism. One will search the New Testament Scriptures in vain for a command to baptize infants. Neither will one find an approved example of the early church baptizing infants. Promoters of infant baptism only **assume** there were infants in the home of the Philippian jailer; the Bible certainly does not so teach (Acts 16:30-33).

Of course, those of liberal persuasion have never concerned themselves with the authority of the Holy Scriptures. This leaves the door wide open for man to do what he desires to do. It allows man to subscribe to the theory that "the Bible doesn't say not to do it." Man must, however, seek God's authority in doctrinal matters. The Colossians were admonished, "*And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name [by His authority, MLW] of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*" (Col. 3:17). It is **only** by recognizing and submitting to Bible authority that we can all speak the same thing, be undivided, and "*be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (1 Cor. 1:10). Such is impossible left to the whims, wishes and will of man! Denominationalism is the ugly fruit born of contempt and disrespect for the Word of God!

Third, infant baptism is not the result of the Christian family, but it is the result of man substituting for a "thus saith the Lord." Infant baptism occurs **only** when one is ignorant of what God has said, chooses not to believe what God has said, or does not care what God has said.

The Bible clearly teaches that "*without faith it is impossible to*" please God (Heb. 11:6). The Scriptures also affirm that "*belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*" (Rom. 10:17). Such being true (John 17:17), can an infant be a believer? Can such a little one "hear" and understand the Word of Christ? Absolutely not! The act of baptism has no meaning whatsoever to an infant. An infant does not **submit** to the act of baptism; the act is forced upon the little one who in all probability will scream and holler to protest such treatment.

What need does an infant have to be baptized? One who believes the Bible realizes that "*each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death*" (James 1:14-15). Can an infant be tempted? Can an infant "lust?" No one in his or her right mind will argue that such is possible.

This leaves only the Calvinistic theory that a baby is born a sinner and is thus doomed and lost. Does the Bible teach such? No! Does the perverted NIV dynamic equivalent translation teach such? Yes! The NIV rendering of Psalms 51:5 says, "*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*" This isn't even a 32nd cousin to a valid translation that says, "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" It is clear that the sin belongs to the mother and not to the newborn infant (cf. Ezek. 18:20).

The act of baptism that Paul proclaimed and practiced is just as binding and valid today as it was then. The inspired Word of God has not been, nor will ever be, invalid or obsolete.

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BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

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God's Grace Is Inclusive

Because of His abundant love for mankind, God extended His grace universally through the death of Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son: "*For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men*" (Tit. 2:11). God does not desire that only some be saved, but He "*would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth*" (I Tim. 2:4). He is longsuffering, "*not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,*" (II Pet. 3:9b). To this end, the Christ "*gave himself a ransom for all*" (I Tim. 2:6a). Accordingly, John reminded the saints to whom he wrote that "*Jesus Christ the righteous...is the propitiation for ours sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world*" (I Jhn. 2:1b-2).

In His promise to Abraham, God first revealed that He planned to bless **all** men: "*And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*" (Gen. 22:18a). This was no generic promise that the patriarch's descendants would 'somehow' be a source of blessing. Rather, the promise had a very specific end: "*Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many: but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ*" (Gal. 3:16).

God's gracious and loving gift is His Son, through Whom everyone ("*whosoever*") may have the opportunity to be saved -- "*have eternal life*" (John 3:16). Every spiritual blessing is in the Christ (Eph. 1:3). The power necessary to save the souls of all men is in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). We should therefore not be surprised that Jesus' final instructions to His apostles involved the universal proclamation of the Gospel of grace. He ordered them to preach it to all the nations, all the world around, the whole creation, and the uttermost part of the earth (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:16; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

Jesus did not "*taste of death*" for only a few or even for many but "*for every man*" (Heb. 2:8). The Calvinistic doctrine of the "limited atonement" is palpably false; God extended grace through Jesus' atonement to all mankind. However, one errs exceedingly to conclude that all **will** be saved just because all have the **opportunity** to be saved.

One can only marvel that the one true and living God--Who displayed His omnipotence in creating the universe and our very selves--is so generous, gracious, and loving.

Dub McClish, Denton, TX

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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TAMPERING

None of us like to have someone tampering with something that we have made, or something that we have said or written. We see regularly where it has been charged--often rightly so--that the news media, written or spoken, have changed, misquoted or misapplied something that another has said or written. We hear someone who takes a "sound bite" of what another has said; and then by quoting out of context or adding something to what has been said, makes it appear as though the one who had spoken had actually said what the commentator wants it to mean. When such misrepresentation is engaged in, it leaves people with damaged--often *irreparably* damaged--reputations in the eyes of others. This is slanderous.

It is equally slanderous to apply such to what God has said. Jehovah God does not like to be misquoted or misrepresented or have His word misapplied. Yet, this is something that is popular today, much of it being done under the guise of giving us "modern translations." Many of these are not truly "translations", since they do not give us a word for word rendering of the original--but prefer to give what is called a "dynamic equivalence." One of these is the New International Version. This is an implied admission of taking liberties with the sacred text. Others are simply paraphrases and not translations, such as The Living Bible. These often are nothing more than commentaries which give us one man's thoughts as to what he thinks, or wishes, God had said.

That man should be so bold as to change what God has said is amazing. However, Satan--from the beginning--has always done so. Remember how in the Garden of Eden, he added the word "*not*" to what God had said, thus making it appear that God said the exact opposite of what He actually stated--and in so doing, deceived Eve into committing sin. When Satan tempted Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 4, Satan quoted Scripture--but misapplied it in order to tempt Jesus. However, Jesus was not deceived and was easily able to refute Satan.

God has warned man repeatedly not to tamper with His Word. In Deuteronomy 4:2, Moses, under inspiration, wrote, "*Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it.*" In the middle of the Bible (Proverbs 30:6) and at the end of the Bible (Revelation 22:18-19) we find similar warnings, thus indicating how seriously God takes this matter. In the text in Revelation fearful punishments are added to emphasize the point. Paul also warns us about perverting (changing or twisting) the Word of God, and tells us that the curse of God is upon the one who will do so (Galatians 1:6-9).

May we therefore take heed to the warnings of Scripture and not tamper with the word of God. May we take care that we do not use or promote that which claims to be a "Bible" that tampers with God's Word.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep Helen Culpepper in your prayers, as well as Les as he continues to take care of her. Also keep in your prayers Pam Gossett's mother, Kathy Treadway's mother and Bronwen Gibson's mother (Lavonne McClish) who has health problems.

Janice Wilson was sick Wednesday evening and unable to be out.

It was good to see Helen Culpepper at services Wednesday evening. It has been a long time since she able to be out.

Ken Chumbley is in Suffolk, Virginia preaching in a Gospel Meeting. Please keep him and the meeting in your prayers.

PROMOTING UNITY

We hear of and see a number of things being promoted today. Some are good and some not so good. Some are Scriptural and others are not. One, however, is really impressed as he reads the Galatian letter, to see that Paul surely promoted unity among his brethren.

I don't guess anybody would think he would promote unity on anything less than a Bible basis. But Paul wanted these brethren to know what real unity was. Take a look at this: "*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*" (Gal. 3:28). So there is no question about the fact of unity. They [that is, the Galatians] occupy the position of unity in Christ, and Paul wants to do all he can to protect the unity they have. How, then, will Paul seek to promote unity? What will an apostle's approach be to such a vital matter?

For one thing, Paul would help them see the price of division. Listen as he says, "*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another*" (Gal. 5:25). That sounds to me like Paul is saying they can self-destruct or destroy one another, like two violent and vicious animals who cut and claw one another until both are disabled beyond recovery. Paul wants his brethren to see that their inward division was too high a price to pay.

One sees this sort of thing in some divorces. Both parties go into court with the intent to destroy the character and good name of the other. When they emerge from the conflict, both are decimated. The children are left bewildered and confused, and are caught between their hearts and heads. Respect for and confidence in the parents are shaken and shattered. That is the price one pays for division.

But what could prevent such division? Well, in the first place, one could never allow himself or herself to act like an animal. Such conduct is manifest in the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). But if we give way to the flesh, it is obvious we are not led by the teaching of the Spirit. We will take the carnal approach--and that means we are no different than the man of the world.

However, we can solve the problem of the fellowship of the saints by promoting the fruit of the Spirit in the saints. Where this is found you have love, joy peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self control (Gal. 5:22-23).

How would you like to be in a situation where only that kind of folks were found? You say, I would love to be there. That is exactly what every congregation of the Lord's people is supposed to be, no more and no less.

Such would surely promote peace.

Winfred Clark

Via The Better Way, Spring, TX