

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

Volume 33

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

May 1999

No. 5

A PLEA FOR NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Part Two - Seven "Ones" of the Church

Number 6 - "One Baptism" (#4)

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

We continue our consideration of the objections some offer against the idea that one must be immersed (baptized) in water in the name of Jesus Christ in order to receive the forgiveness of sins (cf. Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21). Last month's issue discussed and answered the following objections that: (1) *Baptism cannot be necessary to be saved because Mark 16:16 doesn't say, "he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned";* (2) *Salvation by faith is mentioned in many passages where baptism isn't mentioned, like John 3:16; Acts 16:31; and Romans 5:1;* (3) *Since Jesus saved the thief on the cross, who was not baptized, we can be saved the same way; and* (4) *Literal water cannot touch the soul of man. Saying that water baptism is essential in order to be saved denies that God has the power to save man without physical elements of the aid of some person to baptize people. If you did not receive last month's issue and desire a copy, send a self addressed stamped envelope and we will mail that issue to you.*

Remember that we are putting the typical objections to baptism in italic style type and the answers to the objection in regular type.

MORE OBJECTIONS TO THE "ONE BAPTISM"

Objection # 5: The Bible says we are not saved by works in Ephesians 2:8-9, and since baptism is a work, it cannot be necessary to baptize in order to be saved from our sins. Answer: While the Bible does say in Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5 that we are not saved "by works," it also says that we are saved "by works." The whole section of teaching in James 2:14-26 illustrates that works do play a part in our salvation. In verse 14, James asks if one can be saved by a faith without works. He answers "No," by illustrating the example of needing

to help others (verses 15-16) and concludes that "faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone" (verse 17). After some other examples in which he claims that "Abraham was justified by works" (verse 21), he states emphatically in verse 24, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." The terms "saved" in verse 14 and "justified" in verse 24 are synonyms for the same thing, which is freedom from the guilt of and punishment due for sins.

The question naturally arises as to how we can reconcile the passage in Ephesians 2:8-9 with what James wrote in James 2:14-26. Martin Luther thought that James contradicted the apostle Paul, but if one takes that view one must be ready to admit that the Bible is not given by inspiration from an all-knowing, all-powerful God. However, it is not necessary to adopt such a drastic measure. There are different types of works under consideration by the two writers James and Paul. In saying that man is not saved by works, the apostle Paul had in mind the type of meritorious works by which one might boast that one had saved himself, apart from the grace of God's gift of Christ's death on the cross. Nothing that any man could do on his own could possibly save himself. This is why Paul said that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9) and "not of works of righteousness which we have done" (Titus 3:5). There are two things under consideration here. First, no man had been able or ever would be able to keep God's law without sinning (cf. Romans 3:10, 23). Second, since we all become sinners, there is no plan that we could devise and no works we could perform from our own thinking and efforts which could bring us to a state of salvation. If we could live without ever sinning we could boast we did not need

saving. Being sinners, if we could devise a plan and carry it out whereby God would owe us salvation, then we could claim our own works of righteousness had saved us. However, since it is against God that we have sinned, we do not have the right to say how we can make that right with Him, but He does. That way, God says, is through faith in what Christ has done (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-7).

That faith is shown when we believe in what Christ has done and obey what He has said to do! Those who think that they are saved when that have simply said that they "believe in Jesus" have only done half of what God says we must do to be saved. In addition to faith there must be obedience. This is why Jesus said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Jesus is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9), but we have nothing to boast about when we do obey Him. We have only "done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). James 2:14-26 has in mind these types of works when he says we are justified (saved) by them. In Romans 3:20 and Galatians 2:16 the apostle Paul also stated that we are not justified (saved) by the works of the law, referring to the Law of Moses. Those works could not save anyone either, for they had been done away in Christ and were not part of His New Covenant; but baptism into Christ is (cf. Galatians 3:19-29).

While baptism is a work of obedience which is commanded in order to be saved (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21), it is nothing about which we can boast, saying we saved ourselves without Christ's death on the cross and His atoning blood. In fact, we are "baptized into Jesus Christ [and] baptized into his death" (Romans 6:3-5). When we do so we are not following any plan we devised from our own righteousness. We are doing what God said we must do, so we are not earning our salvation or able to boast that we saved ourselves. Apart from believing and obeying God's plan, which includes baptism for the remis-

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication # 211780

...is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

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sion of sins, we can never save ourselves. These are the two different types of works spoken of by Paul and James. There is no contradiction between these two inspired writers. Baptism is a work which is part of God's plan of salvation for mankind and is not the type of works condemned by the apostle Paul (Mark 16:16).

Objection #6: We are to be baptized because our sins are already forgiven. The command to be baptized "for the remission of sins" in Acts 2:38 means "because of the remission of sins already received." Answer: The Greek word "eis" which is translated "for" in Acts 2:38 cannot mean "because of the remission of sins." No reliable translation of the Scriptures has ever rendered the "for" in Acts 2:38 in that manner. It is true that our English word "for" can mean either "because of" or "in order to obtain," but that is not true of the Greek word "eis" in which the Scriptures of the New Testament were originally written. For example, one might say, "The thief was put in jail for stealing." Obviously, we mean he was put into jail because he stole something. We might also say, "You must put fifty cents into the machine for a candy bar." We do not mean to put fifty cents into the machine because you already have a candy bar, but

"for a candy bar," meaning "in order to obtain a candy bar." However, the Greek work "eis" in Acts 2:38 cannot have a causal use (because of the remission of sins) as our English word "for" sometimes has. The word "eis" (For) in Acts 2:38 means "in order to obtain, with a view to receiving" the forgiveness of sins. The phrase "unto the remission of sins" is used in the American Standard Version of the Bible in Acts 2:38 and other passages below.

This same phrase "for the remission of sins" (in both the Greek and English New Testaments) is found in Matthew 26:28; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3 and Acts 2:38. In Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3, the phrase "for the remission of sins" absolutely cannot mean, "because you already have remission of sins," for the simple reason that Christ had not yet shed His blood to atone for the sins of mankind. The forgiveness of sins in those passages was prospective; they were to be baptized with a view to obtaining remission of sins, not because they already had forgiveness. In Matthew 26:28 Jesus said, as He blessed the fruit of the vine which was to represent His blood in the Lord's supper, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Since Jesus had not yet shed His blood, the phrase "for the remission of sins" could not possibly mean, "because you already have forgiveness of sins." The preposition "for" in this verse means that Jesus was to shed His blood "in order to obtain remission of sins" for us. Likewise, in Acts 2:38, although at this time Christ had shed His blood on the cross, those to whom Peter was speaking had not done all that Christ commanded in order to receive remission of sins. For that reason, when they heard what Peter had said about Christ in verses 22-36, they asked what they must do to become acceptable to God. Peter told them that they must "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 Spirit." The phrase "for the remission of sins" in this verse has a forward look and means the same as in the previous uses of the phrase. They were to "repent and be baptized in order to obtain the remission of sins," not "repent and be baptized because you are already forgiven of sins." Their repentance and baptism were both in order to obtain

forgiveness. Could a person be saved without repentance? Of course not. Jesus pointed out that repentance was essential in order to be saved (Luke 13:3, 5). He also taught that baptism comes before salvation (Mark 16:16), not that one is already saved before baptism.

The standard works on the meaning of the Greek words used in the New Testament also testify that the Greek "eis" (for) means what we have shown above. **Thayer's Greek English Lexicon** says of "eis, a Preposition governing the Accusative, and denoting entrance into, or direction and limit: into, to, towards, for, among...to obtain the remission of sins, Acts ii.38" (pages 183, 94). Another top authority in determining the meaning of the Greek words to be translated into our English New Testaments says, "eis preposition with [the] accusative...indicating motion into a thing or into its immediate vicinity...to denote purpose *in order to, to...*for forgiveness of sins, so that sins might be forgiven Mt 26:28; cf. Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3; Ac[ts] 2:38" [Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pages 228-229].

We mentioned earlier that no standard English translation of the New Testament translates the phrase "for the remission of sins" in Acts 2:38 as "because you already have remission of sins." However, at least two translations in fairly recent years have translated "for the remission of sins" in the manner we have insisted the Scriptures teach. The New International Version of 1973 translated the phrase "so that your sins may be forgiven," and the New Revised Standard Version of 1989 used the identical wording. Later editions of the NIV changed the wording to "for the forgiveness of sins" (which really teaches the same thing, but not as clearly), but likely only because of pressure from religious groups who do not want to believe that baptism is essential in order to be forgiven. It is also very likely that the leaders of these groups threatened not to promote sales of the NIV among their members. Since most denominations do not believe that baptism is in order to obtain remission of sins, the decision to change the more accurate reading had to have been influenced by dollars instead of the truth. However, the quotes from above, both the Greek lexicons and Bible transla-

tions, were not made by members of the churches of Christ. The scholars who made the lexicons were at least honest to the true meanings of the words studied, even though they did not identify with religious groups who taught those truths.

Our friends in the Baptist faith have been among the most vocal in opposing the meaning of "eis" (for) in Acts 2:38 which we have shown to be true. However, at least two renowned scholars from the Baptist churches have also admitted the true meaning of the Greek "eis" in "for the remission of sins." J.W. Willmarth wrote a lengthy article in the *Baptist Quarterly* of July 1877, stating, "The truth will suffer nothing by giving *eis* its true signification. When the Campbellites translate *in order to* in Acts ii.38 they translate correctly. Is a translation false because the Campbellites endorse it?" (pages 304-305). Horatio B. Hackett was one of the greatest scholars the Baptist church has produced. In his commentary dealing with Acts 2:38, he stated, "*In order to the forgiveness of sins* (Matt. xxvi.28; Luke iii.3) we connect naturally with both the preceding verbs. This clause states the motive or object which should induce them to repent and be baptized. It enforces the entire exhortation, not one part of it to the exclusion of the other" (*Commentary on Acts*, Andover, revised and enlarged edition, 1879, page 54.). [The term "Campbellites" is a term of reproach used by some denominations for those in the churches of Christ who believe baptism is essential for the remission of sins according to Acts 2:38 and other passages. Although the term is not so widely used now as it once was, it is still in use as a term of derision. Of course, it is always easier to call names than it is to answer arguments like those set forth in these articles. I would be delighted to engage in a gentlemanly public discussion on the purpose of baptism as taught in the New Testament, if there are any takers.]

Objection #7: Baptism cannot be essential to salvation because the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17, thanked God he had not baptized very many people and said that Christ did not send him to baptize. Answer: Actually, the context of 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 argues for the importance of baptism, not that it is unimportant or non-essential. We will show that in a moment.

First, baptism was important enough for Christ to command his twelve apos-

ties to teach it and practice it as they went forth with the gospel. Matthew 28:18-20 shows that baptism was a part of the gospel message and to be done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Also, Mark 16:15-16 shows that belief and baptism come before salvation (remission of sins) and that these were to be the result of the preaching of the apostles. In Luke 24:46-49 Jesus said that "repentance and remission of sins were to be preached" in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. Luke also wrote the book of Acts. He recorded the sermon that Peter preached in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and noted that Peter told the believing Jews to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Peter connected both repentance and baptism to "remission of sins." Paul himself was baptized to "wash away [his] sins" (Acts 22:16).

Second, the apostle Paul argued mightily in Galatians, chapters one and two, that there is but one gospel and that he preached the same gospel among the Gentiles as was preached to the Jews. In Galatians 3:26-27, Paul shows that we are children of God by faith only when we have put on Christ in baptism by being baptized "into Christ." Also, when Paul went to Corinth to preach the gospel to these lost souls, the text says, "And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). "Many believed and were baptized," although Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians that he had only baptized a few of them (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). As many as heard and believed were baptized, but Paul personally only baptized a few.

Third, the apostle Paul showed the absolute importance of baptism in Christ's name in the questions he asked in 1 Corinthians that 1:13, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" These were rhetorical questions, all of which were expected to be answered with a "No." Some of the Corinthians had divided themselves into groups saying they were "of" certain men other than Christ; men like Apollos, Peter, or Paul. Paul deplored the idea that anyone would call oneself by his name, noting that Christ was not divided, that Paul certainly was not crucified for them, and that they were not baptized into Paul's name.

Some evidently thought that they should be called after the name of the one who baptized them. For that reason Paul said, "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name" (verses 14-15). Paul did not say that he was thankful that only a few had been baptized, for that was not the case at all according to Acts 18:8. He was just thankful that he had personally only baptized a few of the many Corinthians who were baptized, lest they might be tempted to say they belonged to him rather than to Christ! Please notice also that Paul did not say, "For Christ did not send me to teach baptism." He said, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (verse 17). We noticed above that the accounts of the Great Commission clearly show that baptism is part of the gospel message that the apostles were to preach (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24), so Paul cannot be saying that baptism is not part of the gospel. It is obvious that Paul taught baptism as part of the gospel (Acts 9:18; 16:14-15, 30-33; 18:8; 19:4-5; 22:16; Romans 6:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12-13). It was not necessarily the role of an apostle personally to do the baptizing of believers. Baptizing could be done by others, such as those not inspired to preach as Paul was, but it does not mean that it was less important than any other element of God's plan of salvation of mankind. To come to any other conclusion makes Paul preach a different gospel and contradicts his teaching in many of his evangelistic efforts and in his letters. The "one baptism" was for Paul a topic of great importance (Ephesians 4:5).

CONCLUSION

There are other objections that are sometimes raised against the necessity of baptism in order to be forgiven of sins, thus coming into salvation in Christ. However, I believe that the principles set forth in answering these seven major objections to the essential nature of baptism will also answer others which anyone might offer.

If some would ask why so much time has been spent of baptism, when only one article was used to deal with each of the other "ones" of Ephesians 4:4-6, I would respond that there is generally much more agreement on many of the other "ones" we discussed. Baptism is a

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stumbling block for most of the religious denominations when it comes to the manner of immersion and the purpose of being baptized in order to receive forgiveness of sins. There are many different ideas about the nature and purpose of baptism, but the inspired apostle Paul said that there is truly only "one baptism." We have tried to set out what the New Testament teaches about that one and only baptism presently acceptable to God. We would be happy to study with you further on this topic, or we encourage you to contact a faithful church of Christ nearest to you for more information. If you believe that we have taught error on this subject, I will gladly read anything you have to say in opposition to the Scriptures presented and try to answer you as quickly as possible. We want only the truth and to teach only the truth.

Next month, Lord willing, we will discuss the seventh and last of the ones Paul presented in our text, "one God."

"MY PEOPLE LOVE TO HAVE IT SO"

by Max Patterson

Jeremiah wrote the words that are found in the title of this article as he wept about the condition of the children of Israel (Judah). It would not be long before they would be carried off into Babylonian captivity as a punishment for their sins.

Jeremiah said, "An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely. And the priests rule on their own authority. And my people love to have it so!" Then he asks such a penetrating question, "But what will you do at the end of it?" (see Jer. 5:30,31 NASV).

Many people do not regard the end or the consequences of their actions. Yet, the Bible is filled with explicit statements about what our responsibility is and the consequences of not fulfilling that responsibility. (see II Tim. 4:1-3; I Tim. 4:1-3; Acts 20:28-31; II Thess. 1:7-9).

People today refuse to be warned about their actions and consequences. Here are a few examples.

•Despite the fact that the Bible teaches "faith without works is dead," there are millions who believe in faith only (see James 2:14-28).

•Despite the fact that the Bible in so many places denies the doctrine of eternal securi-

ty, millions still believe once saved always saved. (see I Cor. 10:12; II Pet. 2:20-22).

•Despite the fact that the Bible teaches the highest of morals and ethics, there are millions who believe if it feels good, do it. (see Mt. 5:27-30; Rom. 1:28-32).

•Despite the fact that the Bible clearly teaches that God is the highest authority, and that he is the one who must be pleased, there are millions who not only want, but are determined to have it their way.

This is a call for men to go back to the Bible. Jeremiah said, "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jeremiah 6:16). And the reaction was much what it is today. The people replied, "We will not walk therein."

What a shame to be lost forever, and to miss out on heaven, just because we had to have it our way! Let us hear the Lord before it is too late.

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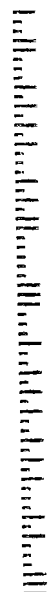
1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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