

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

Established 1953

January 2004

Vol. 38 / No. 1

“CHURCHES OF CHRIST DO NOT BELIEVE ONE CAN BE SAVED WITHOUT BAPTISM”

Criticisms About the Church of Christ

Part Four

By Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

As stated previously in this series, the only important matter is what does the Bible teach on this topic, not what do churches of Christ believe. Of course we want to believe and teach what the Bible does on every subject. If we are wrong, show us from the Bible that we are in error and we will change. On the other hand, if we prove from the Bible that we are teaching the truth and that you are wrong, you need to change.

Nearly every religious group that identifies itself as “Christian” practices some type of baptism for various reasons. We do not have the space to examine the practices of each denomination, so we will simply try to set forth what the Bible says about this crucial matter.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD “BAPTISM”

The New Testament (NT) was written in the common Greek language of the first century and later translated into other languages such as English. In a proper translation process those who know the Greek language and the receptor language (such as English) strive to put the meaning of the Greek words into an equivalent meaning in English. In producing the King James Version and nearly all subsequent English versions, some Greek words were not actually translated into English. They were simply *anglicized*. That is, the letters of the word in Greek were formed into a new English word **without giving the equivalent**

English meaning. The words baptize (a verb) and baptism (a noun) are two such words. Transliterated (put in English letters), the Greek word *baptizo* was made into our English word baptize; and *baptisma* was made into the word baptism.

Even though those Greek words were not and are not properly translated in most English versions of the Bible, we can still know their meanings from Greek-English dictionaries. These are dictionaries that give the Greek word and then present the meaning of those words in equivalent English terms. These Greek-English dictionaries are clear that the literal meanings of baptize and baptism are “the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence” (“Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words”). Other standard Greek-English dictionaries are in agreement. See “Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon,” “Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon,” and others. Literal “baptism” is an immersion, a submersion. Baptism in the original Greek language never meant “to sprinkle” or to “pour” a little water over babies or sick people as some religious groups practice in place of immersion.

NT baptism is a burial in water with Christ and a rising with Him. “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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” (Romans 6:3-4). “*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”* (Colossians 2:12). That baptism requires immersion is also made clear by the actions of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:36-39. **They both went down into the water and came up out of the water!** These actions would not have been necessary if sprinkling or pouring water over the eunuch were acceptable. Both the dictionary definitions and the actions required for baptism show it to be an immersion. Nothing short of that will fulfill the Bible’s requirements.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR BAPTISM

Not everyone qualifies for baptism. There are some things that one must do before one can be baptized. **First**, one must believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God before one qualifies for NT baptism. “*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? 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. 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 8:36-38). Jesus said, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). This naturally excludes babies and children who are incapable of believing or understanding what it means to have faith in Christ as God’s Son.

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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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

P.O. Box 251
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

TED J. CLARKEEDITOR
Phone(870) 625-3217
E-Mailcocfcgn@centurytel.net

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Second, repentance is also required **before** baptism. Repentance is “a change of mind” that leads to a change of the way one lives. Before one comes to God through Christ one does not think about what it means to sin in opposition to God’s will. In coming to God one repents, changes one’s mind about such matters, and is now sorry for sins committed and vows to stop engaging in those sins (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). That repentance is necessary before salvation is clear from the apostle Peter’s teaching in Acts 2. When Peter convinced the Jews that they had put to death the promised Christ (Messiah), they believed Peter and asked, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Peter’s inspired response was, “*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*” (Acts 2:38). No one is qualified for baptism that has not repented first. Babies and little children have no sins of which to repent (Matthew 18:3-5), nor do they have the capacity of mind and understanding to repent. They are not candidates for baptism.

Third, confession of faith in Jesus as God’s Son is a requirement **before** baptism is administered. Remember the eunuch’s confession in Acts 8:37 and Paul’s teaching to the Lord’s church in Rome. “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*” (Romans 10:9-10). Again, neither infants nor other children incapable of making and understanding such a confession are candidates for baptism. While the apostle Paul does not mention either repentance or baptism in the passage just given, that both are plainly required for salvation is seen in other Scriptures (Acts 2:38; 10:47-48; 11:18; 22:16 et al.).

THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM

Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Ask yourself why Jesus placed **both belief and baptism** before salvation! Christ did not say what most denominations try to make Him say – “He that believes is saved and may be or should be baptized.” He did say that one who believes **and** is baptized shall be saved! Some say the latter half of the verse shows that baptism is not essential because Jesus did not say, “He that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned.” The answer to that objection is simple. A lack of belief is enough to condemn a person, but belief alone is not sufficient to save a person (cf. James 2:24). Unbelief by itself will damn one’s soul, but one must believe **and be baptized** in order to be saved. A person who did not believe would not have to be told that he/she would be condemned without baptism for one would already be condemned for lack of faith. Christ said **belief + baptism = salvation**. If either is missing there is no salvation, for 1 - 1 = 0. Belief without baptism will not bring

salvation and neither will baptism without faith.

The Scriptures also state that baptism is part of what is required “*for the remission (forgiveness) of sins*” (Acts 2:38). The word “for” in the phrase “for the remission of sins” means, “*in order to obtain remission of sins.*” “For” is from the Greek word *eis* (pronounced “ace”) and it always has a forward look to it. For example, as it is used in Acts 2:38 it means, repent and be baptized for (with a view to obtaining) remission of sins. While “for” in the English language can look backward and mean “because of,” the Greek word *eis* never has that meaning. One could say in English that a person went to jail for (because of) stealing, but when the Greek word *eis* is translated by the English word for, it never means because of. In other words it is impossible that Acts 2:38 is saying, “Repent and be baptized because your sins are already forgiven.” Besides, will one dare to say that we repent because our sins are already forgiven? Can one be saved before repentance? Not according to several Scriptures (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; Revelation 2:5 et al.). Repentance and baptism go together in order to obtain remission of sins and this is spoken “*in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*” – that is, by His authority, by His command through the apostles.

In Acts 22:16 Saul of Tarsus is told, “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*” Whatever else Saul had to do to be saved, he was told by a man whom the Lord sent to him to be baptized and wash away his sins (cf. Acts 9:10-18). Saul was not told that baptism was the only thing he had to do to have his sins washed away, but it was part of what was required! Add to this the apostle Peter’s statement in First Peter 3:20-21, “*Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 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.” Peter did not say that baptism was the only thing that saves us, but he did say it is part of what saves us! How can anyone deny it?

To further see how essentially connected baptism is with salvation consider the following. Jesus said, *“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins”* (Matthew 26:28). Christ’s blood is the **what** that brings “remission of our sins,” but **when** do we receive remission of sins? Acts 2:38 tells us that **when** we repent and are baptized we receive remission of sins. Revelation 1:5 says Christ *“washed us from our sins in his own blood.”* Again, Christ’s blood is **what** “washes away our sins.” Acts 22:16 teaches that our sins are washed away **when** we are baptized. Finally, the blood of Christ is **what** “saves us.” *“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him”* (Romans 5:9). We are told by Peter that *“baptism doth also now save us,”* making baptism a part of the **when** that Christ’s blood saves us. Baptism saves us because it is a part of God’s plan to save mankind through the blood of Christ. Surely you can see that from this study.

CONCLUSION

The baptism that brings remission of sins, that washes away our sins, and that saves us through the blood of Christ is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ, preceded by the person’s faith in Christ, expressed in repentance and confession of Jesus as God’s Son, our Lord and Christ. This is God’s gospel plan of salvation. Obey it and receive salvation from sin and the hope of eternal life. Reject it and you will remain in your sins and be separated from God for eternity. Do not let the doctrines and commandments of men keep you out of heaven. We will be happy to study this with you further if you will contact us.

WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP

Corrective Discipline in the New Testament

(Part Four)

By Ted J. Clarke

WHAT IS “WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP”?

The word “fellowship” refers to the sharing, the joint participation and communion that saints enjoy together in the *“like precious faith”* we have in Christ Jesus (2 Peter 1:1). It is the sharing of our lives together in the work and worship of the Lord’s church, the association we have together as brothers and sisters in the family of God and the personal relationships we enjoy by virtue of these associations.

But what happens when these relationships are disrupted by the requirement to “withdraw fellowship” from an erring brother or sister in Christ. What are we to do? How are we to act? Withdrawing our fellowship from another is not something we do **to** someone; it is something we do **for** them in order to honor God’s word and to save the erring Christian.

Withdrawal of fellowship is not just an announcement about the church’s need to do so; it is not just sending someone a letter and saying we will remove one’s name from the church roll; and it is not just refusing to use someone in the worship services or work of the church. Withdrawal will likely involve all those things, but it is much more than this. Withdrawal of fellowship is not physically barring someone from our worship services or just forgetting about the brother or sister. This should never be a part of our withdrawal practice.

Withdrawal of fellowship by the church shows the ones withdrawn from that they are no longer in fellowship with God. Fellowship with God and faithful Christians go hand in hand. The church withdraws its fellowship from erring brethren

because it recognizes that God has withdrawn His fellowship. *“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:5-7). Fellowship between Christians depends upon their fellowship with God. To be faithful Christians we cannot offer fellowship to those from whom God withholds His fellowship.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS IN WITHDRAWAL

The following section deals with phrases from the various verses in the New Testament (NT) that deal with the topic of withdrawing fellowship and definitions from word study resources that comment on those passages as well as some personal study.

“Withdraw” (2 Thessalonians 3:6) = “to place one’s self away from” [Vincent’s Word Studies]; “to shrink from a person or thing” [Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words].

“Have no company with” (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Corinthians 5:9, 11) = “signifies [not] to have, or keep company with” [Vine’s].

“Deliver such a one to Satan” (1 Corinthians 5:5; cf. 1 Timothy 1:20) = to turn one away from the fellowship of the saints back into the world, the realm under the power of Satan, where one has lost the esteem and association of the church. The intended purpose is that the person will put to death the desires of the flesh, repent and be restored to the fellowship lost (cf. Galatians 5:24).

“Purge out the old leaven” (1 Corinthians 5:7) = signifies a cleansing by removal and avoidance of further contact with. Defiling influences are to be removed from the church.

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“With such an one no not to eat” (1 Corinthians 5:11 = a literal meal, a part of the social association we are to withhold from the erring. Sharing a meal together always was (and is) an indication of close association with others in some sense. When withdrawing from erring brethren nothing must be said or done to indicate approval of their conduct and present condition. We must never give erring Christians the sense that nothing has changed in our relationship with them. In refusing a close or social sharing with them we must remember Paul’s words. “*Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother*” (2 Thessalonians 3:15). That word “admonish. . .has in view things that are wrong and call for warning. . .based on instruction” [Vines]. While we cannot have fellowship with erring brethren, we are to seek to admonish them at every opportunity.

“**Put away the wicked man**” (1 Corinthians 5:13) = put out from among yourselves, out of association with you.

“**Turn away from**” (Romans 16:17) = keep out of their way [Vincent]; that is the way in which they are walking; avoid them (KJV).

“**Reject, refuse**” (Titus 3:10) = to shun, avoid.

“**Let him be unto thee as an heathen man (Gentile) and a publican**” (Matthew 18:17) = treat as one with whom you desire to have no fellowship; no social contact or association because of his evil ways.

These passages of Scripture demonstrate that withdrawal of fellowship is a matter God takes seriously and so must faithful Christians. These are not actions we take because we hate or have contempt for erring brethren, but because God requires them. We must love God first and also love the souls of the erring, seeking to draw them back into God’s love in Christ. [To be continued in March with “The Purposes of Withdrawal.”]

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GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

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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Publication #211780