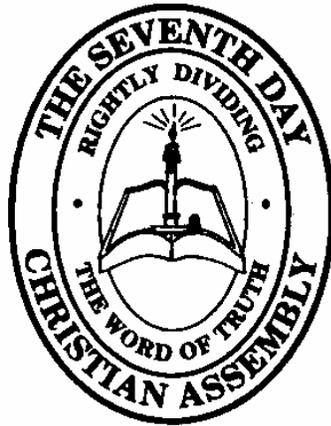


Rightly Dividing

THE
WORD OF TRUTH

Bible Study Course

Lesson Eight:
Baptisms



They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand people. (Acts 2:41)

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. (Acts 8:12)

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 6:4)

an open letter from

The Pastor

Several years ago, I heard a well-known minister of his day describe “baptism” by sprinkling as being like laying a dead person against a tree and throwing a shovelful of dirt into his face. While that is considered to be a humorous analogy, there is a kernel of truth in it. I have also heard sincere people say that all they need to do for salvation is to raise their hands to God and declare their faith in Christ and ask to be saved. In explaining the “all-I-need” part, they said that they did not need to be baptized or get involved in any other kind of *ritualism*. Many radio and television preachers claim that all you have to do to receive salvation and go to heaven is to pray the sinner’s prayer – that is: “God be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13) – and confess Jesus as Savior. This provokes some very serious questions about what God *requires* of us as part of our *faith*.

Why should we be baptized? What is baptism, anyway? Is it merely some kind of hokey *ritual* that *churches* have devised in order to initiate someone into their group? Why do various churches practice totally different types of “baptisms”? Should a penitent be sprinkled, poured upon, or immersed? What is the meaning of the practice? What is *valid baptism* in God’s sight? Surely, if God *requires* such a ritual for people of *true faith*, there must be some reliable instruction in His word that will forthrightly answer these questions. Our problem, *if we want to worship God in spirit and truth* (John 4:23, 24), is whether or not we will obey God’s revelation (Luke 6:46-49). Then...there is Ephesians 4:5: “[There is] **one baptism...**” (emphases added). It can’t be made any plainer than that.

That statement alone would make it apparent that we must understand whether sprinkling, pouring, or total immersion is the only acceptable manner in which one is to be baptized. Two of the three are bogus. What does *God’s revelation* tell us? Are you willing to submit to *God’s revelation*? This is where “the rubber meets the road,” as they say, because *baptism* represents your willing submission to God’s will and rule in your life.

Let’s analyze the word itself, which is translated from a Greek word, and see what conclusion we can draw based on its meaning. You should understand that every reference in the New Testament to the

word *baptize* – whether it is the action taken or the person who performs the action – is derived from the root word *bapto*. This root word describes the action of dipping something into a liquid in order to fully drench it with that liquid. This could include anything from dipping one’s finger in a liquid or dipping a portion of a garment in a liquid. The major emphasis and focus of this root word is in the idea of *fully drenching* the object, not whether or not the part or the whole is dipped. So, whatever is *fully drenched* is going to be *fully immersed*.

Let’s look at the classic instruction we have in Romans 6. Here we get acquainted with the idea that *baptismos* is likened to a *burial* (Greek = *sunthapto*). This is an *interment* – being covered over in the earth, hidden, concealed. You understand exactly what is going to happen when the obituary says that the *interment* of the deceased will take place at such-and-such a cemetery. Whether they are put into the ground or placed into a mausoleum, the effect is the same: they are completely covered – *fully immersed*. So, in Romans 6, Paul points out two things: (a) our baptism is to be a *full immersion* in water as a symbolic *burial* of our old self, and (b) it is to be a *full immersion* into the life of Jesus Christ (*buried* into Christ and *buried* like Christ). Is this *burial* the final word in our confession of faith? No! If we are *buried* like Christ, then we will also look forward to being resurrected from that grave like Christ was from His. This is very important imagery.

Now, let’s read Matthew 12:38-40. In this “sign” that Jesus gave these scribes and Pharisees, He pointed out two important items: (a) He would be *in the heart of the earth* in the same way Jonah was *in the belly of the great fish*, and (b) He would be there for 72 hours – *three days and three nights*. There is no doubt left that He would be *fully immersed* in the grave like Jonah was *fully immersed* both in the great fish and the ocean. Both were *buried* – *interred*. Both were **dead**.

Anyone who *baptizes* according to the scriptural meaning of the word, therefore, will *fully immerse* the one getting baptized. John the Baptist could very easily have been called *John, the one who fully immerses in water*. As they say, “here’s the kicker”: there is not one example of *baptism* by *pouring* or *sprinkling* in the entirety of scripture! You might see examples of people having olive oil poured on them

(continued on p. 17)

Baptisms

I am often amused by the things that people claim are either *necessary* or *unnecessary* for salvation. At times it seems that the *unnecessary* things are the ones that people simply do not want to be bothered with because they think it to be either beneath their dignity to submit themselves to them, or that they know better than the word of God what they need to do. Of course, they could also just simply not *understand* them. Such is often the case with *baptisms*. What possible *necessity* in the salvation process *must be served* by plunging someone beneath the surface of a body of water? That's a fair question. God has an answer.

Please notice that the study concerns itself with *baptisms* (plural). Why? Because God reveals that there is more than one type of *baptism* to which we *must* subject ourselves. I will unfold that mystery for you as we get into the lesson. Whatever they are shown to be, please understand that we are to be *fully immersed* in them – thoroughly and entirely *covered* and *spiritually drenched* by them. Our objective, then, is to understand: (a) why God's word *pluralizes* the word and (b) how we should respond to God's revelation. We will see what form God *requires* and why we should not avoid doing it just as He has *required* it. So, prepare yourself spiritually for a wonderful, eye-opening study. Approach it just as I have instructed and drink deeply from this fountain of truth from God!

Lesson Eight

A *Babel* of Confusion

The street evangelist gets permission from the city to turn on a fire hydrant so he can spray water all over the listening crowd that has answered his “altar call” to believe in Jesus Christ. In the process, he proclaims over them the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19 that they are, therefore, *baptized* in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Down the street, another church official sprinkles a few drops of water over the head of an infant barely a few months old and pronounces the same words over it. In another part of town, an individual steps into a deep tank of water to be plunged completely beneath the surface and have the same words pronounced over him. Which “baptism” is the correct form based on scripture? Which form is *valid* in God's sight? Why should there be any *confusion* about this among churches claiming to represent the God of Truth? We would do well to understand what *baptism* is all about – and if it is *necessary* for salvation. Millions are worshiping God in vain and do not even recognize it. Jesus warned about this *Babel* of confusion during His earthly ministry.

1. Matthew 24:4, 5 – Did Jesus warn that imposters would come claiming to represent Him in one way or another?

2. Matthew 7:21-23 – Did Jesus warn that it is possible to do all manner of *religious* things *in His name*, yet be His enemy? Re-read these verses and write down the *reason* He will reject them.

3. Mark 7:6-9 – What information does Jesus give us in this scripture that helps us to understand His rejection of the *bogus religious actions* of some so-called “Christians”? What is the difference between the *traditions of men* and the *commandments of God*? Does He tell us that some prefer the *traditions of men* over the *commandments of God*? (See also Matthew 15:1-9.)

4. Do Matthew 7 and 24 indicate that the *many* would be guilty of this? Does that leave us with the *few* who would be faithful to God? What does that mean to you when you consider the existence of 32,000+ “Christian” denominations? Would that suggest *many bogus baptisms* – among other things? *Why*?

5. 1 Corinthians 11:18, 19 – Why does Paul say that God allows *divisions* or *heresies* to exist?

Comment: The Greek word for *division* is *schisma*. This describes a split or gap between the beliefs and actions of some as opposed to those of others – a division of opinions. The Greek word for *heresy* is *hairesis*. This describes a dissenting faction who causes *disunion* by favoring their opinion opposed to the established doctrine. Based on those descriptions, like it or not, Paul is evidently saying that God *has allowed* such divisions and heresies to exist so His *True Church* can be revealed. How? Jesus said in Matthew 12:33 that a tree is known by its fruit. What did He mean by that?

In Luke 6:46, He asked some so-called “followers” why they would call Him *Lord* and not *obey* Him. In John 14:15, He said: “If you love me, *keep my commandments*” (emphasis added). John wrote: “He that *keeps His commandments* dwells in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us: *by the Spirit which He has given us*” (1 John 3:24; compare this to Galatians 5:22-26; emphasis added). Those who are *in Christ* will be obedient to God’s commandments just as Jesus Himself was. Those *commandments* do not apply only to the 10 Commandments. In Matthew 11:30, He explained that the things that He requires His true disciples to do are not beyond reason nor too difficult for them to accomplish.

6. 2 Kings 5:1-14 – What thing did God’s prophet Elisha *require* of Naaman in order for his leprosy to be healed? Did he accept Elisha’s instruction? Was that an *impossible* task? Did Naaman think that Elisha should come to him and perform some magical hand-waving over his body? Was the Jordan River any better to wash in than the two rivers of Damascus, Syria? What did Naaman’s servants advise him to do? Why?

Comment: The servants explained to Naaman that he probably would have done some fantastic something to be healed. What if Elisha had told him to take a black cat to a cemetery during the dark of a new moon, strip himself naked and paint his body with smut from an oak wood fire, swing the cat by its tail over his head as he chanted a certain phrase 10 times each to the east, south, west, and north (in that order) – then sacrifice the cat over a cow-pie fire. Naaman would have probably agreed to do *that* because it smacks of something *mystical* and *magical*. But bathing seven times in the Jordan River in Israel was a bit beneath his dignity! What Elisha told him to do was simple and easily accomplished –

even if the trip to the Jordan might have been a bit inconvenient. The question was simple: Was Naaman *willing to obey*?

7. Would you conclude, then, that part of the problem stems from an unwillingness to be obedient to some of the simple things that God *requires* of us? Many times, in spite of how plain the instruction is or how simple it is to accomplish?

8. 1 Samuel 15:1-23 – What was Saul instructed to do? Did he do it just as God’s prophet had instructed him? What went wrong? With what did Samuel equate Saul’s *rebellion*?

9. Verses 24-26 – Is there still a penalty to suffer even if you admit your sin and ask for forgiveness?

10. Compare that incident to Hebrews 10:26-31. What do we have to look forward to if we choose to *rebel* against God’s instructions? Is “falling into the hands of the living God” something that we should take lightly? What does this tell you about God as a *loving* God? Is that word *love* apparently misunderstood and overly emotionalized?

11. Hebrews 12 – Why does God *chasten* His children? What do you show yourself to be if you will not submit to God’s *chastening*? What does v. 10 reveal will be the result of our *chastening*? Is it worth it?

Comment: Some translate the word *chastening* to read *train* or *discipline*. If understood in that light, we are talking about our receiving some type of training from God that is necessary for us to fulfill some purpose He has in mind. It is not saying that God is going to *beat you into submission*. He’s not. He is going to *train* us and *discipline* us as any good father would do. What does the term *disciple* mean? It means *training* that is given to mold, direct, and bring one to maturity. If they wander down a wrong path, then *corrective measures* are taken to get them back on the right path.

Discipline is intended to teach someone how to bring their minds and hearts under control – how to avoid the ways of chaos, confusion, and self-destruction. If you won’t submit yourself to God for His disciplinary measures, then you are no better than a wild, unruly, illegitimate child. It stands to reason that the degree of discipline applied should be in

measure to the amount needed to cause the desired change to take place.

The Lord God shows this characteristic in Jeremiah 30:11 when He tells Jeremiah to proclaim to wayward Israel that He will chastise them *in measure* – in relationship to their sins – but they *will* be punished. He tells them the same thing in 46:28. David even confesses in Psalm 103:10 that God has not dealt with us as our sins *really* require, and he shows how great God’s grace and mercy are toward us. **But** – and this is an exception full of meaning – David showed in verse 9 that “He will not always speak disapprovingly to us nor hold back His anger for ever [too long].” If you prove to be incorrigible, then you will be no child of His. That is the true meaning and force of Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15, and Revelation 19:15.

By all means, pray the way David did in Psalm 6:1: “O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, neither chasten me in your hot displeasure.” But, be willing to be that way when it is your turn to discipline others (read Ephesians 6:1-4). Does that mean that there should be no *physical* punishment? No. It means that if such punishment is required, it should *not* be administered when you are very angry and wrathful, but with love as a necessary object lesson to change the undesirable behavior. It should be administered in relationship to the seriousness of the transgression. And, where there is room for grace and mercy, mix them in with self-control.

Think seriously about this. Be deeply concerned about your need for training and correction – about your *obedience*. Re-read Romans 1:18-32 with this in mind. Pay attention to vv. 24, 26, 28 where God ultimately steps aside to allow them to suffer the ultimate consequences of their sins. Think about the results.

12. Matthew 3:13-15 – Did Jesus Christ set us an example by being baptized? What reason did He give to John for being baptized? Would you agree that there is a *Babel* of confusion that confronts those who want to know God’s truth?

From this point on, we are going to investigate what Jesus meant by saying that *baptism is necessary in order for us “to fulfill all that righteousness demands” (The Jerusalem Bible)*. We will begin with a brief discussion about salvation and its requirements.

Salvation is a *Process*

It is not commonly understood that salvation is a *process*. In other words, it is a phenomenon characterized by gradual changes that lead from point A to point Z. Those changes are part of a *way of life* that must be pursued all the days of our lives. Many believe that merely professing faith in Jesus Christ (sometimes said to be “calling on the name of Jesus Christ”) will bring about your *immediate* salvation. However, we’re going to see that *salvation* occurs at a specific point in time at the end of a *required process of education* in righteousness.

1. Acts 1:1-5 – Does Luke propose to give a historical account of the activities of Christ’s Apostles after the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven? With what did Jesus say the Apostles would be *baptized*? Why would such a baptism be necessary? (Look in John 14 and 16.)

2. Acts 2:38 – List four things Peter told the people to do. Are these actions connected to one’s quest for salvation through Jesus Christ? Which three things *precede* the gift of the Holy Spirit? Are they *required*?

3. John 14:15-18, 26 – As part of our obedience to God’s requirements, what special assistance did Jesus say would be provided? What kind of Spirit is it (don’t answer “holy”)? What will be the reason for giving us this Spirit of Truth? Does Jesus suggest that the Christian will be given an *education* through this Spirit? In what?

4. John 16:7-15 – What kinds of things will be included in this education? List several things spoken of by Jesus. Does v. 12 show us that we cannot understand everything in one fell swoop? Does it suggest that this education will take time to develop and mature?

5. How does this suggest that those who do not follow these steps will not have access to God’s revelation of His *truth*?

6. John 4:23, 24 – Does God *require* us to worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth*? Can you accomplish *true worship* without one or the other? Why?

Comment: What I have demonstrated is the simple, plain revelation of God’s *truth*. He *requires*

our acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He *requires* our repentance – our willing change of heart and mind to be in conformity with God’s revealed truth. He *requires* our *baptism* by water and by His Spirit so our sins can be remitted – forgiven/pardoned – so their penalties will not be exacted from us. The Spirit of Truth will open up our hearts and minds to God’s gradual revelation of His truth so we can be educated in *righteousness* – which has to do with right relationships between us and God and our fellow man.

7. John 8:31, 32 – On what does your knowledge of God’s truth and your true freedom depend? What does the expression “*continue* in my word” mean? Does it suggest a *process* of *required* education? Discipline and training?

8. Hebrews 6:4-8 – What happens to those who do not consider that education worth pursuing once they have begun it? Why would that also be the lesson of Hebrews 10:22-27? (See also Luke 9:62.)

9. John 15:1-4 – Can you be a “Christian” if you are not connected to the *True Vine*? (That could just as easily read *Vine of Truth*.) What happens to those who *were connected* to the vine but who were pruned off because of being *unfruitful*? Does this give us a *huge* lesson about “walking the walk”?

10. Verses 5-9 – How does the expression “abide in me” suggest a *continuing process*? What does the expression “*continue* in my love” mean? Does it suggest that you are not allowed to *quit*? What is meant by the expression “God is glorified when you bear much fruit? You will show yourselves to be my disciples by doing so”? Do vv. 2, 4 suggest that God will *prepare* you for bearing much fruit? How? What happens if it is *not* produced? Are *pruning* and *purging disciplinary* measures used to increase the production of fruit? Is it part of a *process of education*? Explain that. You should be understanding this more fully by now. If not, go back through it and ask God to help your understanding.

Water baptism, then, is one of the *required* steps in God’s Plan of Salvation. It comes as a demonstration that you have repented and accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is not mere ritualism that helps you to *join* a particular religious group. It is the beginning of a change from the human ap-

proach to life’s relationships to the *holy* and *loving* approach to life’s relationships from God’s perspective. *Once this relationship is entered into, it is a life-long process of spiritual education. God expects growth and evidence of change (fruit) throughout your lifetime. If you quit or God prunes you out due to lack of growth and fruit, then you will have lost your chance to be “saved.”* I hope this has been made abundantly clear to you.

Once you have truly complied with these initial steps, then God stands bound by His immutable promise to give you His Holy Spirit that will enable you to produce the spiritual fruit listed in Galatians 5:22-26. This *Holy Spirit* is the *power* John spoke of in John 1:12 that gives us the *power* to become the sons of God. As Paul revealed in 1 Corinthians 2:9-16, this *Holy Spirit* is the *power* God uses to *educate* us in the way God thinks – and the way He expects us to think.

Old Testament Types of Baptism

A *type*, in the sense intended for this discussion, is a *symbol*. A *symbol* is something that stands for something else that cannot be represented or visualized. Jesus’ use of the *wind* in John 3:8 is just such a symbol. Spirit life is very difficult for the human to represent or visualize, so Jesus used the imagery of the wind to make what He was saying more concrete. The Old Testament contains significant *types* – *foreshadows* is another accurate term – of New Testament water baptism that are important for you to understand. A *foreshadow* gives a hint or suggestion about something before it occurs. The sacrifice of the unblemished lamb, for example, is both a *type* – a *symbol* – and a *foreshadow* of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God (see John 1:29 and 1 Corinthians 5:7).

Noah and the Flood

Peter refers to Noah, his wife, and their three sons and their wives as “...eight living beings saved by water” (1 Peter 3:20). Now, notice what he says as he follows up that comment in v. 21: “The like *figure* whereunto even *baptism* also now saves us...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (KJV; emphasis added). The KJV term *figure* is from the Greek term *antitupon*, which is our English word *antitype*. This term means “something that corresponds to or is foreshadowed in a type.” I like the *Revised Standard Version* translation of this verse: “Baptism,

which *corresponds* to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but *as an appeal to God for a clear conscience*, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (emphasis added). Now, let’s study through a few appropriate examples from the Old Testament.

1. Genesis 6:5, 11, 12 – As mankind multiplied on the earth, what kind of effect did Adam and Eve’s sin have upon them? Were they willingly obedient toward God? Or, did they only seek to do those things that brought them physical pleasure?

2. Verses 6, 7, 17 – What two reactions did God have about this overwhelming problem with mankind? What did He decide to do about it? By what means? Was this consistent with God’s attitude that “...the wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23)?

3. Verses 8, 9 – Was there anyone who was selected to survive the destruction? Why? Did his *obedience* play a role in God’s favor toward him?

4. 2 Peter 2:5 – What kind of man was Noah? What is a *preacher of righteousness*?

Comment: *Righteousness* is basically defined as “acting or being in accordance with what is just: honorable, and free from guilt or wrong.” Psalm 119:172 gives us a biblical definition: “All your commandments are *righteousness*.” We get the idea from this that Noah was obedient at least to God’s 10 Commandments – if not other types of laws, statutes, ordinances, so on. And...these were the things Noah attempted to teach the wicked people around him during the 100+ years it took him to build the ark. *They would not listen!*

5. Genesis 6:14-22 – What did God *command* Noah to do in order to be “saved”? Was he expected to do exactly what God revealed to him? Did he, in fact, do it?

Comment: Read also 7:1-6. Building an ark in an area where there was no sea or ocean big enough to accommodate it must have caused Noah to become the butt of these people’s ridicule. Comparing Genesis 5:32 to 7:11, you can calculate that it took *at least* 100 years to build the ark. Some believe that the 120 years mentioned in Genesis 6:3 is the amount of time God gave Noah to build the ark – which means that he would have begun building it around 2468 B.C. If Noah’s son Shem was 100

years old two years *after* the Flood, he would have been 98 years old when they entered the ark. Noah would have been building the ark 20+ years before Shem, his oldest son, was born. The Flood occurred about 2348 B.C. God tolerated this evil for 1650+ years after Adam and Eve’s sin. Noah tolerated for 100+ years the ridicule that surely came from these evil people.

6. Based on what you have read, would you conclude that Noah *believed* God? That he *obeyed* God? Therefore, that he had *saving faith*?

7. 1 Peter 3:20, 21 – Does the Flood *typify* a *watery grave* for that sinful world of Noah’s day? Does Peter say that it also *typifies* our own *deliverance* from sin’s penalty through the *symbolic* meaning of *water baptism* – like Noah and his family were delivered? To what does Peter liken that deliverance?

Comment: Here is the simplicity of this figure/type: Noah was a righteous man who obeyed God’s instructions. He *demonstrated* his faith and trust by exhibiting the same kind of *active* faith that God expects of us today – if we want to be *saved* from the penalty of our sins. *Symbolically speaking*, Noah and his family were put into the water and brought up out of it – a *type/symbol* of the *resurrection from the dead* (*Jesus Christ being our example!*)

If we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, repent of our sins, allow those sins to be *buried* in the watery grave, then come up out of that watery grave to live a *new life* in obedience to God, then we are promised that we *shall be resurrected* to a new life (born again) like Jesus Christ was – being changed from flesh to spirit. Salvation.

Israel and the Exodus From Egypt

Now, let’s look at another interesting *type* from the Old Testament that points to New Testament baptism: the exodus of Israel from Egypt through the Red Sea to the Promised Land. While the children of Israel were in Egypt, they were the victims of some deceitful practices. When they first came there because of famine in their own land, they were welcomed – and even benefitted Egypt largely because of Israel’s next-to-youngest son Joseph (read Genesis 37 and 39-50). When the Israelites multiplied in number and prospered, the Egyptians *forgot Joseph* and began to systematically enslave them (see Exo-

dus 1:7-14). This is *typically* the practice of Satan the Devil (read 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 13-15). So, Egypt is a type of *sin*. Pharaoh and his army are types of *Satan and his demonic forces* who constantly strive to bring us into captivity to sin. What did God command Israel to do? *Come out of sin and go to the Promised Land* (read Exodus chapters 3-14).

Now, the first thing the Israelites had to do was to determine to obey God. Once they had made that decision, the next move was to *act upon it*. God gave them specific instructions about what to do. Embedded in those instructions are several *types/figures/symbols/foreshadows*.

1. 1 Corinthians 10:1-12 – What do vv. 6 and 11 tell us that Israel represents to Christians?

Comment: Whatever translation you read this from, the translation comes from the Greek term *tu-pos* – types, figures, examples, warnings, lessons, object lessons. The *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek/English Lexicon* adds that it also means “a symbol/foreshadowing of the tribulation to come.” So, there are not only *present-day warnings* for Christians, but there are also *warnings about the future* to which we must pay attention. This is the importance of Old Testament *types, figures, and symbols*. In other words, there are warnings embedded in these examples that Christians could also face some type of enslavement by malevolent forces. Israel’s example should teach us that we should have faith in God’s promise of ultimate deliverance and to be obedient to His commands and instructions through His servants.

2. Verses 1, 2 – To what does Paul compare the Israelites’ passing through the Red Sea and the “cloud”? Let’s understand what led up to this.

3. Exodus 12:1-13 – What instructions did the Lord God give Moses about the Passover lambs? Were the Israelites supposed to *eat* the lamb? What did they do with the *blood* of the lamb? What would happen to those who did not follow the instructions?

4. Verse 11 – Why did God *require* them to eat it in the fashion described? Were they to expect that they would be *leaving* Egypt?

5. Verses 14-17 – Did the Lord God *require* the Israelites to mark this occasion with a *yearly* religious convocation? For how long? Was it to be a

constant reminder of how God led them out of Egypt? Why would that *yearly* reminder be important to them – or anyone else? What part does the *unleavened bread* play? (You will study these holy days more in-depth in Lesson 12.)

6. 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8 – What does the blood of the lambs *typify* for Christians? What does the *leaven* represent? Does it appear that Paul calls upon the *Gentile* Corinthians to observe the holy days associated with this Exodus? Why do you suppose that he would do that?

Comment: The Passover lambs represent the crucified Christ, who shed His *blood* for our sins. The *unleavened bread* (see Exodus 12:34) represents *the sinless body* of Jesus Christ that was sacrificed for all of humanity. Eating the lamb and being covered by the blood are *required* for God’s protection as we depart from sin. Paul’s encouragement to observe Passover and Unleavened Bread (see also Leviticus 23:5, 6) was not a *Jewish* thing because these holy days were required by *God* – not Moses (a Levite), not the Jews – in perpetuity. They are constant reminders of God’s involvement in the salvation of mankind.

7. Matthew 26:26-28 – With what does Jesus compare the unleavened bread and the wine during His last Passover meal with His disciples? In effect, did He *change* the Passover symbols from the lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread to unleavened bread and red wine? Why would He do that? (Read John 6:48-58.)

8. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 – Of what does Paul say this is a reminder? Can a person take this wine and unleavened bread in an unworthy manner? Do Passover and Unleavened Bread occur *weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannually, or once a year* (see Leviticus 23:5-8)? Does that help you to understand the expression “*as often as you drink it*” – also translated “*whenever you drink it*”?

Comment: The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is a *memorial* observance. As Paul points out in v. 23, Jesus invoked these symbols during “...the same night in which He was betrayed...” – that is, during the *Passover* He and His disciples were observing (read Matthew 26:17-28; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-20; and John 13:1-16). *Passover* occurs on the 14th day of the month of Abib (also called Nisan) and *Unleavened Bread* (later also called *the Feast of*

Passover – that is, the feast that occurs in relationship to Passover) occurs between the 15th and 21st of Abib. Jesus was betrayed on the night of the Passover observance, which comes only *once a year*. It is in this sense that Paul intended us to understand his expression “...as often [whenever] you drink it...”

9. Exodus 14 – Even after telling the Israelites to leave Egypt, were the Egyptians willing to let them go? When they trapped the Israelites at the Red Sea, what did God tell the Israelites to do? In vv.19, 20, what was the role of the *cloud*? In effect, do you have a *cloud* and a *sea* as Paul disclosed in 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2? What was the *cloud*? Could it represent *Spirit*?

Comment: In Exodus 13:21, Moses reveals that the Lord God (the One who eventually became Jesus Christ) “...went before [the Israelites] by day *in a pillar of cloud*, to lead them the way; and by night *in a pillar of fire*, to give them light: to go by day and night. He took not away the *pillar of cloud* by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people” (emphasis added). The *cloud* and the *sea* are the symbols that Paul equates with the *baptizo* (baptism) of the Israelites. This particular account shows how Jesus Christ is our great protector as we make our exodus from sin toward the Promised Land. Once they were “baptized,” they should not have worried about the Egyptians any more – but...you will find that *sin* was still in their midst even after they had left it. Why/how? When they encountered difficulties in their trek toward the Promised Land, they failed to trust the Lord God to take care of them, and they longed for their former security (?) in Egypt (see Exodus 16:1-3). That’s tantamount to a *false conversion* if that longing persists and blocks the way of faith.

In this instance, you have the mixture of “water and Spirit” (see John 3:5) working toward their exodus from sin toward the Promised Land. Notice, too, that they could have marched day and night when it was necessary because God was with them 24/7.

Remember that this is *symbolism* that points toward New Testament baptism. The Pharaoh and his army represent the *sin* of Egypt that enslaved the Israelites – and...they were *destroyed* in a watery grave.

10. Romans 6:6 – What is supposed to happen to our “old man” (our *sinful*, carnal self) in the baptism rite?

What does the term *crucified* imply? With whom do we participate in this *death*? What is supposed to happen to the *body of sin*? Why is this necessary?

Comment: Acting out things that are to be realized in the future was a method God used with many of His Old Testament prophets (read 1 Kings 11:28-40, Ezekiel 4:1-17, and Ezekiel 5:1-4). This is the case with *baptism*: God *requires* those who sincerely want the blood of Jesus Christ to blot out their past sins to undergo the physical act of being *buried* in the watery grave as a *symbol* of their death. This is to impress upon them the absolute meaning and seriousness of their decision: *that they have truly repented, accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for their sins, and are determined to live a new life indicative of the life we will have when we are, in fact, raised from the dead like Christ was*. So, according to Paul, Israel’s passing through the Red Sea and the drowning of the Pharaoh and his army in a watery “grave” symbolize the New Testament water baptism by which our “old man” (our past life of sin) is put to death so we can emerge from it to a new life.

John’s Baptism

Just before the coming of Christ and the subsequent giving of the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist was commissioned by God to proclaim and prepare the way for Him. He was also commissioned to administer a special type of baptism called the *baptism of repentance*. Let’s understand what John’s baptism was about.

1. Matthew 3:1-6; Luke 1:63, 76 – Did God commission John as a prophet? Was he, indeed, sent to prepare the way for Jesus Christ? What do you think that means?

2. John 1:19-42 – How does this scripture reveal that John prepared the way for Jesus Christ? Write down the specific comments given. How was John to know when he had actually met the Christ? By what name did he call Christ?

3. Luke 3:2, 3 and Matthew 21:23-27 – What kind of baptism did John practice? By whose authority did he practice this baptism?

Comment: These religious leaders recognized the fact that John was a prophet sent by God – but they would not *openly* admit it because doing so would have meant that they would have had to admit

that Jesus was also sent by God. But, they *refused* to admit that about Jesus.

4. Matthew 3:11 and Mark 1:4, 5 – What message did John preach in order to convince people to be baptized?

Comment: John's message was exactly as stated: *baptism of repentance*. Those who were baptized by John had truly repented of their past sins – and were forgiven by God. Since the Holy Spirit had not yet been given (see John 7:38, 39), those who were thus baptized were not “begotten” by the Spirit of God to become sons of God (see John 1:6-13 to see the difference). Luke 1:77 clearly states that John was sent “To give *knowledge of salvation* unto [God's] people *by the remission of their sins*” (emphasis added). By doing this, John was preparing a people to receive and obey *Jesus Christ* when He came. This is what is meant by the expression *prepare the way for Christ's coming*. John witnessed to the people that Jesus was actually the Christ.

Baptism is a New Testament Command

In order to be in obedience to God's expectations of us in the salvation process, we need to learn exactly what Jesus Christ *commands* us to do concerning *baptism by immersion*. Remember this most important scriptural principal: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” (2 Timothy 3:16). If that is true, then you must understand that the *authority of God* is behind what these scriptures reveal. My objective is to teach you this truth without injecting personal opinion into it. Usually, I will signal you when it is personal opinion by saying so. Otherwise, understand that my objective is to show you what God's word reveals to us.

1. 1 Peter 2:21 – Why should we follow in the steps of Jesus Christ?

2. 1 John 2:6 – If you claim to be a *Christian*, what kind of life should you live? Would that include following the example of Jesus Christ?

3. Matthew 3:13-16 – Was Jesus baptized? Why?

4. Hebrews 4:14, 15 – Did Jesus *need* to be baptized *because of His sins*?

Comment: Even though Jesus had committed no sins of which to repent, He was baptized *as an example for us to follow!*

5. Matthew 28:19, 20 – Was this *Great Commission* given by Jesus Christ a *command*? What three things did He expect His disciples to do? Was *baptism* part of that commission?

6. Mark 16:15, 16 – Does this appear to be Mark's version of Matthew 28:19, 20? What is the ultimate fate of those who do not follow this command? So, would you conclude that Jesus plainly *commanded baptism*?

Comment: Jesus used the word translated into Greek as *baptizo* – not *cheo* or *rantidzo*. He was *commanding* complete immersion in water.

7. Acts 2:37, 38 – On the Day of Pentecost, what was included in Peter's answer to those who wanted to know what they *had to do* to correct the situation in which they found themselves?

8. Acts 2:41; 8:5, 12 – What seems to be the biblical revelation of what people did when they repented? See if you can find other examples that support your answer.

9. Acts 10 – Read the entire chapter. What happened to these Gentiles as Peter preached to them? What did Peter immediately conclude as a result of this event?

10. Acts 11:17, 18 – Did Peter use this event as *proof* that God intended to bring salvation to the Gentiles?

Comment: Ten years after the Day of Pentecost event, God sent Peter to the *devout* Gentile Cornelius. However, Cornelius did not have the *knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ*. It was Peter's job to preach the forgiveness of sins through Christ to him and his family. During this sermon, God did an unusual thing to *prove* to Peter and the other apostles that He intended the Gentiles to be baptized: *He gave them the Holy Spirit before they were baptized*. Ordinarily, baptism comes first (Acts 2:38).

11. Mark 1:14, 15 – Which *gospel* are you to believe prior to baptism?

Comment: The gospel preached by Jesus Christ includes believing in Him as our personal Savior – since He is going to be the King of Kings who reigns over that Kingdom – repentance of our sins, baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 is one of several places where Paul shows that he preached the same gospel – what he calls “...the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...” in Ephesians 1:13 (see also 1 Corinthians 15:50; Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:5, and 2 Thessalonians 1:5).

Complete Immersion is the Commanded Form of Baptism

What is the *authority* of Paul’s statement in Ephesians 4:4-6 about the *unity* of the Spirit that is supposed to be in God’s True Church? Remember that all scripture is *inspired by God*. In that statement, Paul says that there should be *one baptism* (*baptisma* from *baptizo*). Yet, many do not baptize in any form, while others *sprinkle* or *pour* and call it *baptism*.

The term *sprinkle* occurs only seven times in the New Testament – but it is always in reference to the blood of Christ...*never* referring to baptism. What is the connection between the sprinkling of the blood of Christ and the New Testament Church? We can find the answer in Hebrews 9:14-28. Paul makes three important points: (a) *both* the Old Covenant and the New Covenant were *sealed* with blood, (b) by God’s law, almost all things are *purged* (cleansed) with blood, and (c) without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Re-read some of this from Lesson Four. Also, read various translations of Matthew 26:28 where some render it: “...this is my blood, which *seals* God’s covenant...” (*Good News for Modern Man*; emphasis added). So, the *sprinkling* of Christ’s blood *sealed* the New Covenant like the *sprinkling* of the blood of sacrificial animals *sealed* the Old Covenant. It is not a reference to *baptism*.

The term *pouring* is also mentioned several times in the New Testament. For example, the *GNFMM* translation of Matthew 26:28 says that Christ’s blood was *poured out*. The *KJV* says it was *shed*. That notwithstanding, *pouring* is never used to mean *baptism*.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that the most ancient form of baptism was complete immersion, which was the principle form of baptism until the

12th Century A.D. Gradually, from the 12th Century until the 16th Century, the practice of pouring and sprinkling became more and more prominent until they ultimately prevailed in the Roman Church – called the “Western Church” – above immersion. One could logically conclude that this was done regardless of the teachings of God’s inspired word – the late innovations of men. Jesus warned in Matthew 15:9 against accepting the commandments of men above those of God.

The first recorded case of sprinkling occurred in the middle of the 3rd Century. Eusebius, a Catholic historian, identified him as Novatian, a citizen of Rome. The way Eusebius recorded this event shows that he was not willing to admit that it was an acceptable form of baptism at that time: “And being supposed at the point of death [Novatian] was baptized by sprinkling, in the bed on which he lay; *if indeed it be proper to say that one like him* [presumably, on his death bed] *did receive baptism*” (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book VI, Chapter 43; emphasis added). In that same account, we see that the Catholic Church had ruled that “It was unlawful that one who had been sprinkled...should enter into any order of the clergy....”

God inspired the use of the term *baptizo*, which means to “plunge into” or “put into.” It is not pouring (*cheo*) or sprinkling (*rantidzo*) – which terms, plainly, are not forms of baptism. Complete immersion symbolizes the *burial* of the old carnal self (see Romans 6:3-6). Let’s notice what the Bible teaches about the proper mode or method of baptism.

1. John 3:23 – Why was John baptizing in the Aenon near Jerusalem? Did it have anything to do with how much water he would need to properly baptize the repentant?

2. Matthew 3:16 – How does this scripture prove that Jesus was fully immersed when He was baptized?

Comment: The expression “...went up straight-way out of the water...” does not necessarily prove that He was immersed. It could mean that He simply left the river where He was baptized. You specifically find the proof in the word *baptized*, that is, “plunged into” or “put into.” This was one of the examples of Jesus Christ that we should follow (1 Peter 2:21).

3. Acts 8:27-39 – After the eunuch received the knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ from Philip, what did he ask Philip to do? What do you think it means when it says “...they went down into the water...”? Do you suppose that there was enough water there for Philip to “plunge” the eunuch completely under for his *baptizma*?

Comment: If Philip were going to *sprinkle* or *pour*, *he* did not have to go into the water – nor did the eunuch. He could have simply scooped up enough in his hand to take care of that business.

So, it should be evident from these examples that the “...*one baptism*...” inspired by God is *complete immersion*. There has never been the necessity for man to concoct his own mode of baptism. If God had not made it abundantly clear by *divine revelation* which method He expected, ***man would not have been required to baptize in any mode!*** Since God has revealed that there is only one mode that He requires, all other man-devised modes are *contrary* to God’s revelation.

God’s word, the Greek language, and the admissions of Catholic historians demonstrate that *complete immersion* was the only method of baptism practiced by the *original inspired Church of God*. We should pay attention to God’s revelation and quit pursuing our own ways.

What Does Baptism Mean?

Is baptism merely some meaningless ritual initiation into a local church group? Or, is there very meaningful symbolism attached to it that God expects us to understand and adhere to? What is the *real* purpose of baptism? What does the *symbolism* mean with regard to the salvation process? Sadly, many who have been baptized – even by complete immersion – really do not understand. Let’s get God’s answer from His word.

1. Romans 8:3, 4 – Why did God send Jesus Christ into the world?

2. Hebrews 4:15 – What kind of life did Jesus Christ live?

3. 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 – For what reason did Jesus Christ die? Was He *buried*? Did He come back to life after 3 days (compare this to Matthew 12:38-40)?

4. Romans 8:11 – Of what importance is God’s Spirit to the believer?

Comment: The example of Jesus Christ was to live a sinless life through the power of the Holy Spirit. In doing this, He *condemned sin* – which means that He could not have been condemned to eternal death because of sin. If you take that power away from sin, then you, in effect, *condemn sin*.

God, however, made Jesus to be *sin* for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Isaiah 53). In God’s plan, Christ would ultimately destroy sin in order to destroy death (see Romans 6:23 re: the wages of sin). Hebrews 2:14 says that He took the human form to do just that. God laid upon Him all of our sins (like the innocent scapegoat on the Day of Atonement – see Leviticus 16:20-22 and Psalm 103:8-12) so He could die in our place and *destroy death*. What should be the result of the destruction of *death*? Two things: (a) the destruction of sin *forever* and (b) the giving of eternal life.

You need to pay attention to the importance laid upon the condemnation of sin, the death of sin, and the restoration to eternal life. They are important parts of the baptism experience.

After three days and nights, Jesus was made alive again by the Spirit of God that had dwelt in Him while He was alive. That is the meaning of Romans 8:11. Verse 10 calls this Spirit “Christ in you.” This is another example Christ set for us.

5. Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Romans 6:23 – Does sin *require* the death of the sinner? (See also Genesis 2:15-17.) Since “...***all*** have sinned...” (Romans 3:23), would you expect that requirement to apply to *you* and *your* sins? So, your *death* is a *required consequence* of your sins?

6. Colossians 2:12, 13; Romans 6:1-13 – Is baptism *symbolic* of one’s *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection* from a “grave”? So, in baptism you *symbolically die*? If you emerge from the “watery grave” – which is a symbol of your *future* resurrection – to a *newness* of life, does that imply that *sin in your life has been condemned*? Should you, once you have been released from the *death* brought by sin, continue to sin?

Comment: The symbolism of baptism is *dual*: (a) it pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and (b) it pictures the death and burial of the sinner and his rising up to begin living a *Christian* (Christ-like) life (read Romans 6:3-6).

Baptism shows our willingness to *bury* sin and the old sinful man (read Romans 6:11, 12) and to walk in newness of life by being obedient to God and His laws through the power of the Holy Spirit – which He promises to give us *after* our baptism.

So, baptism shows our willingness to *totally surrender* our lives to God through Jesus Christ (read Romans 6:16-22). God demands unconditional surrender to His rule and His authority over our lives (see 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). By acting out in symbolic form your own death, burial, and resurrection, you demonstrate your willingness to make that surrender – as well as your desire to obey God in all matters of faith and holiness. The question you need to confront at this point is simple: *Have you done this? If not, when will you do it?*

Baptized “In the Name of Jesus Christ”

As with many things in scripture, there is controversy over something as simple as the words that should be used when someone is baptized. Some go to Matthew 28:19 where *Jesus Christ* said that His disciples were to be “...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. ...” Others go to Acts 2:38 where *Peter* said they should be “...baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ...” What they do not understand is simple: If it is a contest between what *Jesus* said and what *Peter* said, then *Jesus* is to be followed because He is the Christ. *But, it is not a contest, and the problem is not in choosing sides over which phrase should be uttered over the candidate for baptism.* The answer to the problem is found in the meaning of the phrase *in the name of*. Let’s understand this fully.

1. John 3:22 – Were people baptized as a result of Jesus’ teachings?
2. John 4:1, 2 – Did Jesus make and baptize more disciples than John the Baptist? Who did the actual baptizing – Jesus, or His disciples?
3. What does this expression mean: “*In the name of the law of _____, you are under arrest*”? Is the arresting officer attaching a person’s *name* to that statement? Or, is the arresting officer giving the *name of the authority* (city, county, state, or nation) by which he is *empowered* to make the arrest?

4. Acts 2:37-41 – Is it apparent by this description that the disciples were acting by the *authority* given to them by Jesus Christ to continue to baptize disciples for Him? In His name?

Comment: The expression *in the name of* generally means by the *authority* of. When one has the *authority* to conduct business for someone, he has been given the power and freedom to do it according to the dictates of the authorizing power. In essence, it is considered the same as if he were the authorizing power himself! When the disciples baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ*, it was as good as having been baptized by Jesus Himself.

5. Colossians 3:17 – Are True Christians commanded to do *all things in the name of* Jesus Christ? Are they given *authority* to act on God’s behalf through Jesus Christ? Does 2 Corinthians 5:20 support this idea? What is the role of an *ambassador*?

Comment: An *ambassador* is one who acts on behalf of someone else. He does not pursue his own agenda; rather, he represents the agenda of the authorizing party. In fact, he would not be named an ambassador if he could not be trusted to act in the best interests of the authorizing party. Jesus Christ gave the authority to baptize to His ministers – and, they must represent Him in carrying out their duty. They must not pursue their own agendas. In this sense, God’s ministers baptize *by the divine authority* given to them by Jesus Christ.

6. Matthew 28:19 – Let’s look closer at this scripture to see if there is a conflict between it and Acts 2:38. We will focus on the term *in*.

Comment: This verse is translated by *The Anchor Bible* and *The Living Bible* like this: “baptizing them *into* the name of” – which necessitates another look at what happens during baptism. What this reveals to us is simple: this verse is not simply a liturgical formula to be pronounced over the baptismal candidate; *it is a description of what that baptism has accomplished.* What does that mean?

The Greek preposition *en* (in, into – among many other meanings), in some situations, is used where one might anticipate the preposition *eis* (into – among many other meanings). It appears that *TAB* and *TLB* have anticipated *eis* (into). So, is there a difference between being baptized *by the authority of Jesus Christ* and being baptized *into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*?

The Anchor Bible commentary notes give us an interesting answer. They explain that *in the name of* expresses the individual's expression of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord – as well as his faith that the baptism is accepted by God as an expression of that faith. *Into the name of*, however, means that the one who is baptized pledges his allegiance to Jesus as Christ and Lord – with the faith that he is now accepted into *fellowship* with God and His Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The net effect is that the individual has been *begotten* as a child of God – an action that can ultimately result in being added to the Elohim family through a resurrection from the dead (being “born again”). According to *The Interpreter's Bible*, the individual is baptized into the *possession* and *protection* of the God Family, and a vital spiritual union is established between them (vol. 7, p. 624).

Simply put, to become a “Christian” means that you have been given the Lord God's own name (“little Christ”). Another way to understand it is this: we are baptized or immersed *into* the *divine family name*, called “God,” by the authority of Jesus Christ. According to Ephesians 1:13, 14, the Holy Spirit is given as a down-payment until God is ready to change us from flesh to spirit. This is called *redemption* (which is our release from sin and finiteness).

7. Romans 8:14; 1 John 3:1 – Are spirit-begotten Christians plainly called *sons of God*?

Comment: Understand this fully: the Christian is presently Spirit-begotten, not *born again*. John 3:5 says that we must be *born* (Greek = *begotten* – this is the *Father's* action) of *water* and of *Spirit*. At present, the true Christian is, to borrow an analogy, in a *fetal* state. Even couples who are “pregnant” consider the fetus their child! As I quoted my psychology professor: “At the point of conception, your state is *fetal*.” Unless something goes tragically wrong, there is nothing that will prevent the fetus from being *born* (the *mother's* action – remember that the Church is the *mother*). After having been immersed in water and God's Spirit, God considers true Christians to be His children – who are waiting to be *born* into the God family (see Romans 8:19). Therefore, when we are baptized *into* the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – having received the *begetting Spirit* – we are called by the Family Name, that is, *children of God*.

Is Baptism *Really* Necessary?

Many radio and television preachers tell you that all you have to do to be saved is to name the name of Jesus on your lips. *Really?* Is that all? I have heard many of them say that all you have to do is pray the sinner's prayer (see Luke 18:13). If that is true, then why is so much emphasis placed on being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit? Let's look at God's inspired word of revelation and understand what *God* says about it.

1. Acts 1:5 – Did Jesus promise His disciples that they would be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit?

2. Acts 2:1-4 – When did the Holy Spirit actually come to *baptize* believers?

3. Verses 16-18 – Had God planned to make His Spirit generally available to mankind? So, this Day of Pentecost was not a day when only the *12 disciples* of Christ received the Holy Spirit?

4. Verse 38 – What relationship did Peter make between *baptism* and *receiving the Holy Spirit*? Would you conclude, therefore, that you must be baptized in order to receive the Holy Spirit?

Comment: This Day of Pentecost (see Leviticus 23:9-21 regarding the way the Day of Pentecost is calculated in God's Holy Day Calendar) in A.D. 31 was the inauguration of the time of fulfillment for the symbolism contained in it. We will study God's Holy Days in a later lesson, but suffice it to say that it pictures God calling out an *early harvest* of *first-fruits* for His Family – Jesus Christ is pictured in the wave-sheaf offering as the *first* of the *firstfruits* (see Acts 26:22, 23 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-23). This day in A.D. 31 began the era during which God will put His Spirit in all who are repentant and baptized as He commands. He expects true Christians to be *fully immersed* – **completely filled** – with his Spirit, not willy-nilly, incompletely, or haphazardly.

5. 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13 and Colossians 1:18 – How do we become members of the *body of Christ* (the Church)? Is the word *baptized* an important word for understanding Paul's meaning here? Why? Can we simply *join* the Church – or, must we be *put into it* by God's Spirit (remember that *baptizo* means “to plunge” or “to put into”; also, read John 6:44, 65)?

6. Romans 8:9 – What determines whether or not we belong to Christ? So, if we do not have God’s Holy Spirit, then we are not true Christians? If we have merely named the name of Jesus on our lips, does God violate all of this instruction and make us His children anyway? If we must be begotten by *water* and *Spirit* in order to be *born again*, does God honor any *shortcuts* man might devise?

Comment: Just being physically baptized in water does not put us into God’s Church. We must be put into His Church *by His Spirit* after our baptism. God knows our hearts – whether or not we have truly repented – and places his Spirit in us accordingly. Unless and until we have received His Spirit, we might sit among God’s true people, but we will not belong to the *body of Christ*.

Therefore, it is the gift of God’s Holy Spirit that *plunges* us – that *baptizes* us – into the True Church of God. This is the purpose of the *baptism by/of the Holy Spirit*. Has God put you into His Church in this manner? Both water baptism and Spirit baptism are *required* by God!

How do We Receive the Holy Spirit?

What does God’s word reveal to us about receiving the Holy Spirit? How is it received? Is it an *automatic* consequence to being baptized – or, is something else required? Remember that Cornelius and those with him were unique because God gave them the Holy Spirit *before* they were baptized in order to make it clear to Peter and the other apostles that God was opening the way of salvation to the *Gentiles*. All other examples you are about to study show it coming *after* baptism.

1. Hebrews 6:2 – Is “laying on of hands” one of the basic doctrines of Jesus Christ?

Comment: We will study this doctrine in more detail in a later lesson, but you should understand, at this point of the discussion, that it is a basic doctrine of Jesus Christ. These doctrines are teachings that Jesus Christ considered important as required practices of the true faith – part of what Jude calls “...the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Since God does not allow us to add to or take away from His word (read Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Revelation 22:18, 19), we

cannot simply dismiss the importance of these doctrines as being insignificant to the salvation process.

2. Acts 8:14-17 – Why were Peter and John sent to the new converts in Samaria? Had these people been baptized? Had they received the Holy Spirit? What did the disciples do so that they could receive the Holy Spirit?

3. Verses 5-13, 18-22 – Was Simon Magus baptized by Philip like the other new converts had been? Did he see that the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of hands by the disciples? Did the laying on of hands represent a special *power* to Simon? So much so that he tried to purchase it?

Comment: Peter rebuked Simon for thinking that he could purchase the power to lay on hands. Look up the term *simony* in your dictionary. You can see the far-reaching effects of Simon’s sin. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that Simon wanted to add this power to the arsenal of magic tricks he used to spread his own religious philosophy – which, after he was baptized, became the foundation for a quasi-“Christian” form of Gnosticism (a form of *false* Christianity).

4. Acts 19:1-6 – Which baptism had these people received? Had they received the Holy spirit? Did Paul *re-baptize* them? Why? What did Paul do after he *re-baptized* them? Does this suggest the importance of being baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ*, as well as the importance of the *laying on of hands* by God’s authorized ministers for the receipt of the Holy Spirit?

Comment: It should be plain to you that the Holy Spirit was given to baptized true believers when God’s true ministry laid hands upon them. It is no different in our day and time. When God’s ministers baptize the truly repentant, they lay hands upon them and pray over them for the receipt of the Holy Spirit. Those who have received the Holy Spirit without the laying on of hands (Acts 10:44-48) are *special exceptions* made by God for special purposes.

5. 2 Timothy 1:7 – Is there any special *feeling* or *emotional outburst* that *must* accompany the receipt of the Holy Spirit – like speaking in “tongues” or uncontrollable weeping?

Comment: Understand what constitutes a *sound mind*. Several translations translate that Greek term to be *self-control* – “sober good sense.” Coupled

with a spirit of power and love, this *self-control* enables an individual to maintain a *reasoned, disciplined, well-ordered life*. Being swept away in *uncontrollable emotion* is not in character with the receipt of the Holy Spirit. While it is true that there are examples of people who did speak in “tongues” upon receiving the Spirit, it is not a litmus test that determines whether or not an individual has actually received it.

The Holy Spirit enters one’s *mind* and begets him spiritually (read John 3:5, Romans 8:16, and 1 Corinthians 2:10-14). Certainly, there can be feelings of gratitude, joy, and thankfulness as expressions of one’s own natural emotions. But, the absence of great emotional outbursts does not indicate that God did not forgive the individual and, therefore, withheld His Spirit.

Can You be Saved *without* Baptism?

Now let’s examine the comment we discussed in the beginning of this lesson: *You don’t have to be baptized in order to be saved*. We have seen that it is *commanded* by God – but...what about the thief on the cross? Was he *saved* without being baptized? We’ll examine that with regard to what actually constitutes *salvation* according to God’s revealed word.

1. Romans 5:10 – By what means are we actually *saved*? So, baptism, in and of itself, does not *save* us? It is *part* of the process?

Comment: Baptism is required as *part* of the *salvation process*. It is symbolic of the *death* of Jesus Christ – as well as our own participation in that death. ***Do not forget this point: baptism also pictures the resurrection of Jesus Christ to spirit life! It is that very powerful spirit life, when given to the true Christian as it was given to Jesus Christ, that saves us!*** Jesus Christ was, as we learned earlier in Lesson 3 (#15, p. 19), the first in a series: the captain of our salvation. Had Jesus never been resurrected, we would never be saved (read 1 Corinthians 15:12-23). So, baptism is a *picture/symbol* of our salvation by resurrection from the dead. It is plain, then, that the thief on the cross was no more *saved* by what he asked of Jesus Christ than anyone else is presently *saved*. To think otherwise is faulty reasoning.

2. Luke 23:42, 43 – What did the thief ask Jesus Christ? Did he confess his sins and make a statement about repentance and acceptance of Jesus

Christ as Lord and Savior? Are those necessary steps in the salvation process (read Romans 10:8-10)? What did Jesus say in reply to the thief’s request?

Comment: The thief asked *to be remembered* by Christ when He sets up His kingdom. Part of the problem many have with understanding this passage hinges on a matter of *punctuation*. Most translations punctuate the passage so that it *appears* that Jesus and the thief would be in Paradise *that very day*: “I tell you[,] *today* you shall be with me in Paradise.” We should know that there are several ways ideas can be expressed. Our question is this: Did Jesus tell the thief: “I tell you that you shall be with me in Paradise *today*”?

Consider this from the *Companion Bible*: “The interpretation of this verse depends entirely on punctuation, *which rests entirely on human authority*, the Greek manuscripts having *no punctuation of any kind till the ninth century*, and then it is only a dot [in the middle of the line] separating each word” (*Bullinger’s Companion Bible*, Appendix 173; emphasis added). (It-would-be-similar-to-this-line) So, the commonly held translation could be incorrect because it is based on incorrect placement of the punctuation. If the comma was placed differently, it would definitely change the meaning of the verse. How could we be sure that the punctuation has been *incorrectly* placed?

Here’s what we know from scripture itself. First, Jesus gave the scribes and Pharisees the sign of Jonah to show that He would be *dead* and in the grave *three days and three nights* (Matthew 12:38-40). There would be no reason to express it like that except to say that He would be there the equivalent of 72 hours. Second, Mark 15:44-46 shows that Jesus was, in fact, *dead* before He was taken from the cross to be buried by Joseph of Arimathea. You have learned about the falsehood of the immortality of the soul in Lesson Three, so Jesus did not have a soul that automatically survived the death of His body. Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4, what he was taught by Jesus Christ when he was converted: “...that Christ *died* for our sins *according to the Scriptures*; and that He was *buried*, and that He *rose again* [from the dead] the *third day according to the Scriptures*” (emphases added). The “*scriptures*” to which Paul referred were from the Old Testament – prophecies. So, even before the Word became flesh as Jesus Christ (John 1:14), it already had been determined that He would spend three days

and three nights in the grave. Third, if all of that is true – *according to the scriptures* – then *Jesus did not go to Paradise the day He was crucified*.

It is interesting that the Lamsa translation reads like this: “Verily I say unto thee today[,] thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” Notice where they placed the comma. What this means is different from the way it is commonly translated: “I am telling you this day that you will be with me in Paradise.” When will that be? We have at least two scriptural clues: (a) 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 shows us that the dead *in Christ* and the living *in Christ* will be redeemed by Jesus Christ *at His return* – *together*, not separately as each person dies; and (b) Hebrews 11:39, 40 shows that all the saints of God from the creation *until Christ’s return* will receive the reward *together* – not separately. The dead thief would not precede any other true believer even if he had been “converted” or “saved.” We will study more about his position in “Paradise” when we study the resurrections in Lesson Ten. Suffice it to say at this point that Jesus Christ promised him that he would be alive during His reign after His return. His *salvation* is yet to be determined. God’s word reveals that this is not the only “day of salvation.”

The truth is simple: the thief was *unable* to be baptized because of circumstances beyond his control. Since baptism is not what determines our salvation or gives us eternal life, he did not *lose* his opportunity to be saved. If there are circumstances which absolutely prevent a repentant individual from being baptized, that would be God’s problem, not ours. He commands complete immersion for all who are able. Those who are able must not deliberately ignore, reject, defy, or refuse to obey this command from God. That would be an act of willful disobedience and would cause a loss of salvation unless and until it was repented of.

What about Infant Baptism?

From where did the practice of infant baptism come? Is there anywhere in scripture where God commands it? Admittedly, God did command males to be *circumcised* on the eighth day after birth, but circumcision and baptism are two totally different matters. So, does this mean that the practice is a *commandment of men*? Let’s examine its history and learn the *truth*.

The concept revolves around the concept of “original sin” supposedly inherited from Adam. It is a

pagan concept that teaches that unless the individual is baptized, s/he is eternally lost *because of Adam’s sin*. The question is simple: Are you *lost* because of *Adam’s sin* – or *your own*? This makes God seem to be unfair because *your* eternal life or death would hinge on the sin of one man and one woman: Adam and Eve.

What does Romans 5:12 say? It says that sin *entered* the world by Adam and Eve’s sin. But, why was death passed upon all of mankind? Because *everyone sinned!* Romans 3:23 says unequivocally that “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Believe it or not, accept it or not, like it or not, John 3:16-18 says that *all* (which includes *infants*) are *condemned* unless and until they believe in Jesus Christ. It was for the *salvation of all of mankind* that Jesus Christ came to be sacrificed for our sins. If that is true, would God be just if He eternally condemned an infant who died *before* it was old enough to understand sin, its consequences, and how to properly repent? No! If this were the only day of salvation, quite naturally there would be great cause for concern. But Isaiah 2:1-5, Zechariah 14:16-19, and Revelation 20:1-3, 5, 11-15 suggest that the 1,000-year Kingdom period and afterwards are also periods when God will deal with all of the difficult questions about those who never have a chance to understand His truth through no fault of their own – the infants, the heathens, the deceived.

Neander, in his work *History of the Christian Church*, accounts for how infant baptism was introduced into “Christianity”: “...When the notion of *magical influence*, a *charm* connected with the *sacraments* [baptism being one of them], continually gained ground, the *theory* was finally evolved of the unconditional necessity of *infant baptism*. About the middle of the third century this *theory* was admitted in the North African Church...but while in *theory* the necessity of infant baptism was admitted, still in practice it was very far from being generally prevailing” (Vol. I, pp. 313-314 – Torrey’s Translation; emphasis added).

Many of the early Church “fathers” believed in various *pagan* traditions and beliefs, including the *pagan theory* of infant baptism, and were instrumental in syncretizing them into “Christianity.” Among them were Origen, Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian (Bishop of Carthage in North Africa), and Augustine of Hippo (the chief defender and promoter who considered the pagan Plato to have been an early Christian). It was because of Augustine’s

influence that the practice became a general ecclesiastical institution (Vol. 3, p. 193). Cote's *Archeology of Baptism* states that it was finally *universally* practiced in the 6th century – made compulsory by an edict from Emperor Justinian, who reigned over the Eastern Roman Empire from A.D. 527 to A.D. 565. The edict commanded all unbaptized pagans, including women and children (infants included) to present themselves to local churches to be *immediately* baptized. History reveals that infant baptism was inspired by pagan Egyptian beliefs and practices; therefore, it is a mere doctrine of men – not a commandment of God. God expects us to be mature enough to know about the consequences of sin and how He plans to deliver us from its consequences. That ability is most generally reached when one is between the ages 16 to 20. Christ and His apostles *blessed* little children, but there is no evidence that they *baptized* them.

Some Final Thoughts

From God's perspective, there is no good reason for a person, once s/he understands what must be done in order to acquire the salvation God offers us in Jesus Christ, to put off being baptized. Even if you are infirm, weak, elderly, or spiritually immature. How could you be "perfect" *before* you have received God's Holy Spirit?

I have provided you enough information in this lesson to understand this subject *according to Scripture* – even how you could have received a *false baptism* and stand in need of being re-baptized. The examples we studied from the New Testament showed people who wanted to be baptized *immediately* upon understanding God's truth. This demonstrates an understanding of an *immediate need* for forgiveness and release from their slavery to sin – an *immediate need* for Christ as Savior.

What I have shown you in this study should also make it clear that mere "acceptance" of Christ is not enough. Profession of faith, while a very vital part of the salvation process, won't in and of itself save you. Hopefully, you can see that much more is needed – including belief in specific doctrines like the *gospel of the Kingdom of God*. This Bible Study Course lays out many of those specific doctrines in contrast to what is commonly taught. You must come to understand and believe God's *revealed truth* – to repent of your sins and determine to overcome, with God's help, your own human nature and all the

wiles of Satan the Devil. Once that basic attitude is in place, then you are "ready" for baptism. *This is the way to salvation that God has revealed in His word of truth. Dare we think that we know better than God and try to take shortcuts?*

After you have been baptized and had the laying on of hands, then you will receive the Spirit of God – which, in effect, *plunges* you into the body of Christ, *the true, spirit-begotten Church of the Living God*. You become a *begotten* member of the Divine Family of God – an heir of salvation and a true Christian! What a wonderful calling! What a wonderful potential!

If you would like to discuss baptism with me, please contact me. It would be my great pleasure.

an open letter from (continued from p. 1)

The Pastor

(anointing) or blood sprinkled on them (ceremonial cleansing), ***but neither of these rituals is ever represented as being a baptism!*** Do either of them achieve a *full drenching* of a *part* of something (*bap-to*)? Yes. But – and this is a meaningful exception – *anointing with oil* and *sprinkling with blood* do not represent a *burial*. We must not allow ourselves to think otherwise. To think otherwise is to fall victim to "the way that *seems right*" (Proverbs 14:12).

The term *sprinkle* only occurs seven times in the New Testament – always in connection with the blood of Jesus Christ, not baptism. It comes from the Greek term *rantidzo*. The term *pouring* is also used several times in the New Testament – but *never* in relationship to *baptism*. It comes from the Greek term *cheo*. *Baptizo* is the term God inspired the New Testament writers to use exclusively for the ordinance of *baptism*. Therefore, *pouring* and *sprinkling* are ***not*** forms of *baptizo*. *Baptizo* is shown to be a symbol of *complete burial*; *rantidzo* and *cheo* are not.

With that in mind, let's get started in this most important and revealing lesson. Our objective is to fully understand exactly what God commands concerning water baptism. We want to fully understand what baptism *really* means to those who want to become *True Christians* and *inheritors of the Kingdom of God*. We will look into the validity of infant baptism, "baptism of the spirit," and "water baptism."

Are they commanded by God – or...merely the inventions of men supposing that they are serving God by employing them?

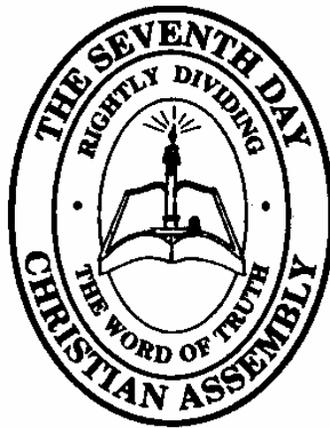
Get out your Bible and study materials so you can read every scripture and write down all of your answers. Do not be tempted to take shortcuts because you will only deny yourself the full understanding that God is making available to you. Don't forget to ask God to help you to understand what you are about to study and to *thoroughly comprehend* the vital *truth* of this most important subject. May the God of Truth bless your understanding as you do so.

In Christ's Service,

Larry E. Ford, Pastor

P.S. You should also remember that those who are *buried* should be *fully dead*. God expects our old self to *fully die* so that what He raises from the *grave* can be *fully new* (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). I thought you might need to know that.

THIS BOOKLET IS NOT TO BE SOLD.
It is published by The Seventh Day Christian Assembly, Inc.
as a free educational service in the public interest.



Straight Talk . . . Plain Truth

Larry E. Ford, Pastor
4929 Ga. Hwy. 33 South
Doerun, GA 31744
(229) 777-0741
tsdca@hughes.net

Contributions to help defray the costs of publication and mailing are gratefully accepted.

© 2009 The Seventh Day Christian Assembly, Inc.
All Rights Reserved