

A BIBLICAL EXAMINATION OF BAPTISM



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By Dr. Max D. Younce,

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INTRODUCTION

May I point out that this book is a "Biblical Examination," NOT a Biblical exposition of the Ordinance of Baptism. It is written to the laymen of the church, not the college professor of seminary graduate. My purpose is to present as simply as possible what I consider to be the clear teaching concerning this ordinance of the church, as spoken of in Scripture.

I have purposely avoided stating some of the beliefs and doctrines of various denominations, sects, and groups concerning baptism. I feel that a personal study of God's Word is of the first and foremost importance. With a knowledge of the Word of God's teaching on any subject, the Christian is then prepared to make a discernment concerning false teachings.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit (person), but try the spirits (persons) whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." - 1 John 4:1

I have attempted to cover some of the major portions of Scripture concerning the various baptisms mentioned therein. May this book be sent forth as an effort to stimulate the reader to a more concentrated and thorough study of God's Word. If this is accomplished, then my purpose for writing *The Biblical Examination of Baptism* will have been achieved.

Pastor Max D. Younce, Th. D.

I. INFANT BAPTISM

A. The Tradition:

By use of the word "infant," we are referring to babies and all children who have not reached the age of accountability. Their baptism is administered by the rite of sprinkling, with the idea that this suits the baby for acceptance into Heaven by the Lord. As religious and appealing to the flesh this ceremony is; one can search the bible through, but will come up empty handed when looking for Scripture to support such an ordinance or practice.

After a person has reached the age of accountability (this varies with the child), they are responsible for their own destiny of Heaven or Hell by their acceptance or rejection of Christ as their Savior. Since a baby is incapable of making that decision, it is asinine to think God would leave the eternal destiny of an infant in the hands of its parents. If that were true, some babies would go to Hell because of unbelieving parents. Our Lord disclaims any responsibility for such a thought. Only to religious tradition can such a damnable claim be accredited.

Again, we emphasize that nowhere in God's Word do we find that babies are to be--or ever were--baptized. As we find in Scripture, the prerequisite for baptism is always belief or faith in Christ as Savior; a baby is incapable of doing this. In Roman, we find that baptism is a testimony of a Christian's new LIFE and WALK with Christ.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into (unto) Jesus Christ, were baptized into (unto) his death." - Romans 6:3

In baptism, by being placed under the water, we show, symbolically, a public testimony of our personal, living faith in Christ's death as payment for our sins.

"...that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the father..." -Romans 6:4

Therefore, coming up out of the water of baptism is one's testimony of his faith in Christ's resurrection. This is the Gospel that must be believed to have eternal life, the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of our Savior.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the GOSPEL which I preached unto you ... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." - 1 Corinthians 15:1,3,4

Then, we are instructed in Romans 6:4, "even so we should walk in newness of life," as a continuance of our testimony for Him. My question is, since baptism is a testimony and declaration to walk in newness of life, how does a baby do this? Of course--this is impossible! Should we press this tradition to a conclusion, babies that are born and die within a few months after birth would then be condemned, having no opportunity to be baptized.

The late Dr. Harry Ironsides once related that a writer endorsing "household baptism" stated that "parents who brought un-baptized children to him in prayer for blessing, were only bringing Cain's offering!", i.e., un-baptized children were the children of Satan, since Cain was of that Wicked One (Satan, John 3:12). Can one imagine the mental agony and depression parents experience when abused with this kind of philosophical tradition, void of Scriptural truth?

B. The Tragedy:

Only in eternity will it be revealed how many souls have plunged into Hell, with their memory of baptism as a baby bearing the responsibility for their fate. This, in no way, relieves the burden or recompense to the parents, who followed this lie and those who have penetrated and administered the lie of infant baptism. So many times, down through the years, when trying to lead someone to the Lord, I have been advised that their parents had them baptized when they were a baby. Their reasoning and confidence is asserted when they assure me that Mom and Dad would not have done this if it wasn't necessary for their Salvation. Once the parents have their baby baptized; that baby, when an adult, is then placed in a position of going against its parents, should he stand on God's Word in the Doctrine of Baptism. For that person to conclude that God was right and their baptism was not founded on Scripture, puts them in a position diametrically opposed to their parents beliefs. This is a very difficult thing for children, and adults, to do when facing their parents.

Some time back, a wonderful Christian lady related to me that she was having a real problem with her stepson who had come to live with them. His mother had him baptized when he was a baby and he is now convinced that will take him to Heaven (he is only 10 years of age). The stepmother is continually trying to show and persuade him that Christ is the only way to Heaven (John 14:6), not baptism. The situation had become a difficult one, since his mother has influenced him otherwise. If he trusts Christ as his Saviour, he knows he will have to conclude his mother is wrong.

Psychologically, a child may be thinking that his parents will hate him, dislike him, or not trust him, if he goes against what his parents have taught him. These thoughts are

a real detriment to a son or daughter when trying to lead them to trust Christ as their Saviour. Of course, "Old Scratch" (Satan) is always present to keep those thoughts surfacing and activated, to keep them from being saved. The sad thing is...many times parents don't even go to Church or have any concern for God's Word. They have their baby baptized and this seems to give their conscience some relief of any future responsibility. How sad when a child's eternal destiny is at stake.

I hope you can begin to see the eternal consequences that many will experience as a result of infant baptism. Remember, no where do we find in God's Word that infants are to be baptized. No human effort ever fits a baby, adolescent, or adult for the Kingdom of God.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God." -John 1:12,13

C. The Truth:

The pseudo-doctrine of infant baptism is built upon tradition and theory as a result of man's imaginations, "vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Colossians 2:18). Christ rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for placing their traditions over the Word of God:

"...This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men ... And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." -Mark 7:6, 7, 9

Paul, again, in Colossians 2:8 gave the warning,

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

As one Bible scholar has put it concerning those who teach and practice infant baptism, "It seemed to me that they had read their teachings INTO Scripture, NOT OUT OF IT; rather EISEGENIS, than true EXEGESIS." When religion introduces tradition, any Scripture is sought which would seem to justify its use. So, let us examine the error of this and then explore the truth.

1. Examining the Error:

The reasoning of many is that if a whole household is baptized, it must include babies also. Let us examine some of the errors that are projected. Cited are some of the passages which are used.

a. Lydia's Household.

"And when she (Lydia) was baptized and HER HOUSEHOLD, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." -Acts 16:15

On the part of those who endorse infant baptism, it is presupposed that her household included a baby, or babies; yet, God's Word contains no such account. There is no record of Lydia being married, being a mother, or having children in her home. We are told that after Paul and Silas left Lydia's house, they were beaten and out in prison. Upon their release, they returned to Lydia's house and we find out who composed the household. The record is given in Act 16:40.

"And they (Paul and Silas) went out of prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed."

These brethren, as spoken of in Verse 15, made up the household of Lydia. She could have given them free lodging, or could have charged them for their lodging, we simply do not know. "*Her household*" in Verse 15 does not necessarily mean her own family; but, from the record, would be inclusive of all that were lodging in her home; which, from Verse 40, would have been "*the brethren.*" These were the ones baptized, along with Lydia, in Verse 15 and spoken of as "*her household.*"

"...She (Lydia) attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." (Verse 14). (Then she was baptized.)

"Her household," as the "brethren" in verse 40 were called, shows us they were saved and then baptized. Paul never baptized anyone to be saved, only those who were already saved.

b. Jailer's Household.

Another of the Verses used to support infant baptism is found in Acts 16:30,31...

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

The record of what took place is very simple and concise; the jailer had brought Paul and Silas to his home, as recorded in Verse 34:

"And when he (the jailer) had brought them unto his house, he sat meat before them..."

Paul and Silas then witnessed to all that were in his house, as recorded in Verse 32:

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

Their message was:

"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved..."

The whole household believed (Verse 34):

"...he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing on God WITH ALL HIS HOUSE."

After this the jailer and his whole house were baptized, as stated in Verse 33:

"And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was BAPTIZED, he and ALL HIS (HOUSEHOLD) straightway."

In Verse 34 we are told that:

"...BELIEVING in God with ALL his house."

It is evident there were no babies present or belonging to his family, as a baby is incapable of understanding and believing Paul's message; therefore, the "all" that composed his household excluded any infants. Only those that believed were baptized--made up of everyone present and his family.

c. Household of Stephanas.

Paul bears record of baptizing the household of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 1:16. Here is the account:

"And I baptized also the household of Stephanas..."

Again, there is no mentioning of infants being baptized or being in the household of Stephanas. We do find in the same epistle, Paul mentioning the family of Stephanas in Chapter 16, Verse 15, as the whole family having addicted themselves to the ministry of the Saints. Here is the record:

"I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have ADDICTED THEMSELVES TO THE MINISTRY OF THE SAINTS.)"

No infant can do this, thus excluding any infants from being in the household of Stephanas. I hope you can begin to see the extremes to which religion will extend itself in misuse of Scripture to support its tradition. Proverbs 30:6 is surely a warning to those who exercise this practice:

"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

d. House of Crispus.

Paul, while on his second missionary journey, had left Athens and arrived at Corinth. Many there were led to Christ and baptized, including the chief ruler of the synagogue and his whole family. The record is given in Acts 18:8:

"And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, BELIEVED ON THE LORD WITH ALL HIS HOUSE; and many of the Corinthians hearing BELIEVED, and were baptized."

The only ones baptized were those capable of believing. Belief in Christ makes one Christian, belief in God's Word and a willingness to obey makes one desire to be baptized. There is no mention, or even a hint, of infants being baptized within the family of Crispus.

2. Examining the Truth:

To bring an infant to a minister or priest for baptism and blessing would actually be accusing God of not loving little babies. Would one dare insinuate that the God of the Universe does not care for or His watchful blessings on a baby until it is baptized? Is baptism the "switch" that activates God's love to the child? In other words, prior to baptism, God does not love the child. This is what tradition and false doctrine does in a very subtle way; it falsely accuses God of not loving little babies until they are baptized.

Infant baptism also substitutes the minister or priest in place of Christ as the Mediator who confers the blessings to the child by means of baptism. Would not 1 Timothy 2:5 be applicable here:

"For there is one God, and ONE MEDIATOR between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

No priest or minister has any power to confer blessings upon anyone--infant or adult! This power rests solely in the hands of our Savior, the Lord Jesus.

In the Synopsis, we have the record of little children and infants being brought to Christ, un-baptized, to receive His blessings. Matthew 19 and Mark 10 tell us that children (Gr. "a young child") were brought to Christ; while Luke 18 lets us know that some of the mothers brought their babies (Gr. BROPHOS, "infants") to be touched by the Lord. Does this constitute a contradiction, we ask? Absolutely not! --since we have both infants and young children being brought to the Lord at the same time; therefore, the Gospels are not contradictory, but, complementary and complete. Here is Dr. Luke's account in Luke 18:15,16:

"And they brought unto him ALSO INFANTS, that he would touch them...(15). But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (16).

The Greek word for "children" in Verse 16 is "paidion" and is used of both infants and young children. Our Lord summoned both the mothers with infants and those with young children. To these He stated, *"for of such is the kingdom of God."* Should one of these infants die unbaptized, Christ assures the parent that they belong to the kingdom of God. Baptism has absolutely no place in any person's life until after they are saved! When these parents brought their

children, Christian baptism had not yet been introduced for the Church. Matthew 28:19,20 instructing the Eleven Disciples to baptize occurred after the resurrection of our Lord.

From Luke 18:15,16 we are assured of several facts:

- a. Infants and small children were brought to Christ (Matthew 19:13).
- b. These were never baptized, as that ordinance was still forthcoming.
- c. Christ rebuked the disciples for interfering.
- d. Christ loved the infants and young children, held them, and blessed them; yet they were un-baptized.

"...and He (Christ) took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." -Matthew 10:16

- e. Christ assured their parents and all present that these little ones, even though un-baptized, belonged to Him and His kingdom:

"...for of such (children) is the kingdom of Heaven." -Matthew 19:14

One may ask, what did Christ do to bless these Children? Here the Greek word for "blessed" is "EULOGEO" and means "to speak well of; praise; thank; or involve a benediction upon." Verbally, our Lord was letting everyone present, know how much He loved these babies and little children--the product of His creation!

Now, we are going to list, for a simple comparison, man's religious tradition:

- a. No un-baptized baby can receive blessing from the priest or minister. (Tradition)
- b. No un-baptized babies are going to heaven. (False)
- c. The priest or minister will confer the blessing. (False)

One can easily see that church tradition is diametrically opposed to God's Word. Who will you believe? The Lord's plea is found in Psalm 118:8:

"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."

II. BAPTISM FOR SALVATION (EXAMINING VERSES USED TO SUPPORT THIS THEORY)

B. Acts 2:38

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ..."

This is one of the favorite passages used by the "Campbellites," or Church of Christ, (also, Lutherans and Catholics) to endorse water baptism for salvation. The key to getting the proper understanding of this Verse is found in the little Greek word "EIS" translated "for." The Greek "EIS" is translated various ways in the New Testament, depending on the context and the usage of the word itself, by demonstrating basis, ground, aim, or purpose.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 2:7 "EIS DOXAN HEMON" is translated "unto our glory" (KJV). In the RSV, it is translated "for our glory." It is translated thus in demonstrating aim or purpose, that being, "our glory." In Matthew 12:41, "EIS" is translated "at," demonstrating the basis or grounds, that being, the preaching of Jonah was the grounds for the repentance of Nineveh, "*...because they repented at (or 'because of') the preaching of Jonas.*"

A.T. Robertson, a well-known Greek scholar, has pointed out that the "Greek preposition 'EIS', translated 'for' in the phrase 'for the remission of sin,' may also mean 'because of.' An example of this can be found in Luke 11:32, where the text says that the people of Nineveh '*...repented at the preaching of Jonas...*' The word 'at' is a translation of the same Greek term 'EIS' found in Acts 2:38. The people of Jonah's day, you see, did not repent for his preaching; but, *because* of it."

Dr. John R. Rice, a worthy scholar, agrees with this translation of "EIS." For a complete quote on this subject from his book, "*Filled With The Spirit, The Book of Acts,*" please see Appendix A on page iv of the Index to Scriptures.

With this in mind, let us return to Acts 2:38 where the Greek "EIS" is translated "for" in the KJV and "unto" in the RSV. In these instances, the Greek "EIS" would be incorrectly translated "for" and "unto." The correct translation would be "BECAUSE OF," a more accurate rendering. Therefore, in Acts 2:38, "EIS" is showing the "basis or grounds" for baptism, that being their remission of sins BECAUSE OF their belief in Jesus Christ. This would then be in perfect agreement with all other Scripture concerning salvation. Here is how the Verse would read in its proper translation,

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ (EIS) BECAUSE OF the remission of sins."

In other words, "repent" or "change your mind" about the Christ you crucified with the wicked hands (hands of unbelief - Acts 2:23) and receive Him as your Savior; then be baptized, thus publicly identifying yourself with Him in profession of your faith.

It would be contradictory of Peter to proclaim salvation in Christ only; then state you have to be baptized to be saved. Notice Peter's words in Acts 4:12:

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Was it not Peter who stated in Acts 2:21:

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the NAME of the Lord shall be saved."

He did not instruct them to call upon baptism to save them! Peter had instructed these Jews to be baptized AFTER they were saved, not only as a testimony to others, but also of having a good conscience within themselves by being obedient to the Lord. Peter, later, expressed this in his first epistle, I Peter 3:21:

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (NOT THE PUTTING AWAY OF THE FILTH OF THE FLESH (i.e. our sins) but the answer of a GOOD CONSCIENCE toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ?"

What does baptism save us from? A guilty conscience before our Lord in not refusing to be publicly identified with Him by water baptism. How wonderful for the child of God to always be able to proclaim,

"For I am NOT ASHAMED of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." – Romans 1:16

B. Acts 22:16

"And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

If a person were to open their Bible and read this one verse, one could only conclude that baptism was essential for salvation. Should a person desire to prove that the Bible says "There is no God," one could locate such a statement; BUT, should one desire the truth of what God has said, the whole verse or context should be read. In this case, Psalm 53:1 reveals something to the contrary of just reading one line from the verse.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good."

How important it is to examine the context, which will always reveal the truth of a subject to the person who will be honest with himself.

The subject matter in question, of which Verse 16 is a part, begins back in Acts 21:15 where Paul goes to Jerusalem. It is here in the Temple that the people apprehended Paul ...

"And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut." - Acts 21:30

Paul was not in the inner sanctuary (ho naos), but only in the outer court (to hieron). They were beating Paul when he was saved by the chief captain and soldiers (21:32). As they were leading him to the barracks of the Roman soldiers ("castle" 21:37), Paul asked the chief captain for permission to speak to the people (21:39, 40). His testimony is recorded in Chapter 22:1-21 (The same account is recorded by Dr. Luke in Chapter 9, with more details.)

Prior to Ananias' instructing Paul to be baptized, we find that Paul was already saved. As Paul was approaching Damascus, the Lord intervened and challenged Paul with these words...

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ... I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest ... (Acts 9:4) "And I (Paul) said, what shall I do, Lord?" - (Acts 22:10a)

Paul's salvation is evidenced by his acknowledgement of Christ as his Lord, or Savior (Acts 22:7,8,10). It should also be noticed that Ananias called Saul a BROTHER in Acts 22:13.

(Ananias) "Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, BROTHER Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him."

Only the saved are spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ, and such was Saul. Since Paul was already saved and addressed as a brother in Christ by Ananias, what did Ananias mean by telling Paul to be "baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Verse 16)? One must remember there is a judicial justification and a practical justification of sin. When Paul was saved, he received remission for all his sins, judicially, i.e., the cross bore the eternal payment for Paul's sins.

"Being justified (declared absolutely righteous) freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (payment) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." - Romans 3:24, 25

Ananias was instructing Saul as to how to deal with his past sins practically and publicly. Every Jew and Gentile knew of Paul's commitment and reputation concerning his persecution of Christians.

"And Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord..." - Acts 9:1

"...I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee (Christ): and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." Acts 22:19,20

Now that Paul is a Christian, his public profession of Christ is of the utmost importance. His baptism would be a public testimony of his faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With his baptism, he was now publicly identifying himself with those Christians he once persecuted. The sins Paul was going to wash away were his acts of persecution against Christians, prior to being saved.

Judicially, Paul's sins were judged on Calvary, now they would be "washed away" PUBLICLY in the eyes of the Christians who knew of his conversion (made public by his baptism). You can rest assured, Paul gave his testimony at his baptism by calling

on the name of the Lord. The sins of Paul's persecutions against Christians would never be repeated again! His PUBLIC profession, from time on, "washed away" any doubt of those sins ever being repeated.

God had taken a murderer and made him a missionary, turned a persecutor into a preacher, and used him to write 14 of the 27 Books of the New Testament. Yes, judicially, Paul's sins were accounted "paid in full" at the cross; PUBLICLY, they were "washed away" as there remained no doubt in people's minds as to where he stood, remaining faithful to his Lord, until his death.

C. John 3:5

"Jesus answered, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Those who endorse water baptism for salvation, refer to the word "water" in this Verse and claim it is speaking of water baptism. The problem that first arises is, the word "baptism" is never mentioned in this Chapter. You see, one must always ADD to God's Word to create a doctrine that is foreign to the mind, purpose and will of God.

Now, let us examine the context and other Scriptures which will shed the light and give us the proper meaning and interpretation of this Verse. Notice that Verse 5 corresponds with Verse 3, the end result being the same, that of seeing the Kingdom of God (Vs. 3) and entering the Kingdom of God (Vs. 5).

"...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." - John 3:3

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." - John 3:5

In these Verses we see that the end result is the same, and so is the causative action. Therefore, "born again" means exactly the same as "born of water and the Spirit," only phrased differently. Christ made it perfectly clear that our first birth will never fit us for eternal life, and is recorded in Verse 6...

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh..."

So corrupt was our first birth, that God never tries to remake it, repair it, or reuse it. That is why our earthly bodies will never enter the glories of Heaven. Paul made this clear in 1 Corinthians 15:50,

"...Now this I say, brethren, that FLESH AND BLOOD cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth CORRUPTION inherit incorruption."

In other words, no amount of good works, promises, resolutions, water baptism, church membership, or any human efforts of SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS will ever merit eternal life. That which is "born of the flesh" is still flesh, no matter how it is dressed up with religious attire; it will always fall short of God's righteousness (Romans 3:23).

You can take a car, fix all the dents, patch all the rust, put "mag" wheels on it and paint it with the finest lacquer there is; BUT, if it doesn't have a motor (the new birth), it's not going anywhere! I have preached hundreds of funerals, and every person in that casket was dressed in fine attire, but they were all still dead! No matter how you dress up this old nature with religious garments, God Has concluded...

"There is none righteous, no, not one." - Romans 3:10

Therefore, a new birth--a spiritual birth--is necessary to enter the Kingdom of God. This is called "born again" (or "born from above"), or "born of the water and the Spirit." This same phrase or wording is used in 1 Peter 1:23...

"...Being born again, not of corruptible seed (first birth), but of incorruptible, by the WORD of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

It is the Word of God that embodies the truth and the Holy Spirit which convicts a person of that truth (John 16:7,8). Since we are "born again" by the WORD of God in 1 Peter 1:23, it can only be that the word "water" used in John 3:5 is used metaphorically of "the word" and water baptism is not what is being conveyed here.

In John 15:3 we can see that cleansing is used in connection with the Word of God,

"...Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you."

Paul, in speaking of the of the Body of Christ, uses "water" in reference to the Word of God in Ephesians 5:26,

"...That he (Christ) might sanctify and cleanse it (the Church) with the washing of water by the word."

You see, water for cleansing, pictures the Word of God; and water for drinking, pictures the Holy Spirit of God...

"...He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)." - John 7:38,39 (See also, John 4:14)

Christ makes it perfectly clear what He means by "being born again" while still speaking to Nicodemus. Here is the record, given by our Lord, Himself, in John 3:14, 16,18...

"...And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life ... He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

"So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." - Romans 10:17

No one is ever saved by water baptism; it is the blood of Christ shed on Calvary's cross which provides salvation, and faith on the believers part which activates that salvation for eternal life.

D. Galatians 3:27

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

This is one of the "Sugar Stick" Verses used by the proponents of endorsing salvation by water baptism. All one has to do is read Chapter 3 completely, as the entire chapter is presenting "salvation by faith, alone," as contrasted to the "works of the law." Baptism is a work--defined as such--because they are trusting in that human effort of righteousness to be saved. In examining the surrounding verses, it becomes

evident that Verse 27 is speaking of spiritual baptism, and not water baptism. When we place our faith in Christ, we are spiritually baptized into His Body.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." - 1 Corinthians 12:13

Notice that Paul used the same language in Galatians in reference to spiritual baptism as he does in 1 Corinthians...

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (i.e., the Body of Christ)." - Galatians 3:27,28

If this was water baptism that placed us into the Body of Christ in Galatians 3:27, then it would also have to be water baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13--which it is not--as the verse clearly states! Paul would have contradicted himself in Verse 27, if this is water baptism for salvation. In Verse 24, Paul said we are justified by FAITH, alone.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be JUSTIFIED BY FAITH." (See also Romans 5:1)

In Galatians 3:26, Paul says we become a child of God by faith, not baptism...

"...For ye are all the children of God by FAITH in Christ Jesus." (See also John 1:12)

Then in Galatians 3:29, Paul asserts that we are heirs according to God's promise--not man's baptism!

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and HEIRS ACCORDING TO PROMISE (not baptism)."

Since all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16), then Scripture cannot contradict itself. Paul would not have told the Ephesians they were saved 'by grace through faith,' and then tell the Galatians they were saved by water baptism.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." - Ephesians 2:8,9

Conclusion: Galatians 3:27 is spiritual baptism, not water baptism.

E. Mark 16:15,16

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believeth not shall be damned."

At one's first reading, "*he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" would seem contradictory to the multiplicity of verses which say we are saved by believing only. For example, 1 John 5:13 states authoritatively that a person can know with absolute certainty that they possess eternal life, yet there is no mention of water baptism.

"These things have I written unto you THAT BELIEVE on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

Peter states it is not water baptism or any human effort that redeems a person, but only the blood of Christ.

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." - 1 Peter 1:18,19

One should take the time to check his concordance and read all the Verses that promise eternal life by faith and belief ONLY. The gospel of John, where belief and faith are mentioned over 100 times, would be a good place to start. Here is just a couple:

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." - John 3:36

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." - John 6:47

Comparing these Verses with Mark 16:16, there either has to be an explanation or we definitely have a contradiction between Peter, Mark, and John! May I draw your attention to the last phrase in Mark 16:16, "*...He that believeth not shall be damned.*"

It does not say,

"...He that believeth not (and is not baptized) shall be damned."

Only those who "believe not" shall be damned--in perfect accordance with John's statement in John 3:18...

"...He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Both Mark 16:16 and John 3:18 state that a person is condemned if they do not believe; but nothing is said about being condemned if one is not baptized. All Scriptures agree to this conclusion. Since we are not condemned for not being baptized, then what does the opposite mean when Mark says "*He that believeth AND is baptized shall be saved*"?

It is easy to understand this Verse when the child of God realizes there are TWO who recognize that he is justified as being saved. The "believing" in Mark 16:16 justifies the person in the eyes of God as being saved; this is our position in God's eyes, our salvation by belief or faith. Their public baptism is their testimony, justifying them as being saved in the EYES OF MAN. The lost will not recognize and justify a person as being a child of God, unless he hears the testimony AND sees the works compatible to a Christian. Baptism declares,

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation."

This identification is justification in man's eyes that I am saved. "Believeth" in Mark 16:16 is to the Book of Romans what baptism is to the Book of James. Romans 4:5 says, "*...But to them that worketh not, but BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the ungodly, his FAITH is counted for righteousness* (justification in God's eyes)."

Notice James 2:17,18 where man cannot see our faith, unless it is outwardly evidenced.

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead (in man's eyes), being alone. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works (justification in man's eyes)."

Therefore, "*he that believeth*" justifies me in God's eyes as being saved, AND my baptism justifies me as being saved in man's eyes.

"*Believeth*" is my position before God, whereas baptism is my walk and testimony before men.

F. 1 Peter 3:20,21

"When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by (through) water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh [i.e. our sins], but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Several years ago, my wife and I were listening to the car radio, having just tuned into a religious broadcast. After a few minutes, the minister quoted one sentence from Verse 21, that being "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us*"--period! He did not finish the verse, but went on to explain, at great length, the necessity of baptism for salvation. Again, I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of reading all of a verse, including the surrounding text, to receive the correct interpretation and meaning. In 2 Timothy 2:15 we are instructed to "rightly" divide the word of truth," NOT "rightly chop up the word of truth!"

Since Verse 21 begins with "*the like figure*," it is referring to that which is set forth in Verse 20. It should be noticed that in Verse 20, the "*eight souls that were saved by water*" should be translated "saved through water"; NOT, "*by water*." The eight were saved from the flood waters by being in the ark--a type of Christ. They were not saved by the water for it was that which destroyed! Therefore, "*the like figure*" is figurative of the ark of Christ which provided absolute safety from the flood waters of death. The flood waters testify of death and the ark, of resurrection. Notice Genesis 8:4,

"...And the ark rested in the seventh month on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat."

It is not by chance that the ark (type of Christ) rested on the mountain on the 7th month of the 17th day. Centuries later, God changed the calendar. Noah's calendar was in effect until the emancipation of Israel from Egypt and God then instituted their religious calendar. The first month of Israel's religious calendar was the same as the 7th month of Noah's secular calendar, or our April. The Jewish Passover, representing Christ's death, was on the 14th day (Leviticus 23:4,5); therefore, Christ

was resurrected three days later on the 17th, the same day the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, showing resurrection.

Conclusion: baptism does not save us; but, identifies us publicly, showing our faith is in the death, and resurrection of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus.

Returning to 1 Peter 3:21 where the phrase "baptism doth also now save us" is explained within the Verse, itself. Here we have the "negative" and the "positive." The "negative" tells us what baptism does not save us from. Here is the record...

"...not the putting away of the filth of the flesh (i.e. our sins)."

Now the "positive" telling us what baptism does save us from, that being a GUILTY CONSCIENCE before God. Again, the record...

"...but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

How simple the Scriptures are when we are willing to accept God's Word as our Authority. A child of God is saved by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8,9), but will be void of a good, clear conscience until they are willing to be identified with Christ by their public baptism.

"Go ye therefore, and teach (i.e. make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." - Matthew 28:19,20

III. WHO IS TO ADMINISTER THE ORDINANCES OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER?

This may come as quite a surprise accompanied with some controversy; but, I know of no requirement in Scripture for human ordination by a board of preachers to authorize a man to preach or to fill the position of pastor. That calling is of the Lord, not man; and with the calling, the Holy Spirit will supply the gifts necessary to fulfill that ministry (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). I know preachers who have had little or no formal Bible College training, yet have and are now doing a great job for the Lord, just as well as those with formal training.

Philip did not pass in review of an ordination board to receive credentials to preach, yet he baptized many of the Samaritans, men and women (Acts 8:12). He also baptized the Ethiopian (Acts 8:38). I am aware of those who were "ordained" (Gr. KATHISTEMI, "appointed") to serve tables by the laying on of hands, one of which was Philip (Acts 6:1-6). This was not to sanction him as a public minister, but to appoint him for the specific responsibility of serving tables. This appointment was made distinct from the ministry of "preaching the word" as recorded in Acts 6:4...

"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

I am sure you recall the baptism of Paul by Ananias in Acts 9:17,18; yet, we do not have recorded anything about Ananias being ordained or being a preacher. A statement by the late Dr. Harry Ironsides in his booklet on baptism is enlightening.

"Also ordination of Elders to act as overseers (bishops) where it was a question of local rule simply and not necessarily of public ministry (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-10; 1 Timothy 3:2-7).

The laying on of hands to Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13 was done as a custom, showing as a sign their approval and support for the ministry they were called to. This was the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey. They were called by the Holy Spirit and sent by the Holy Spirit, not man! Notice Acts 13:2,4...

"...The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them ... So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost..."

It must be remembered that they had been recognized as teachers and preachers for quite some time prior to this. Barnabas had located Paul in Tarsus and both went to

Antioch. Here they stayed a year preaching and teaching in the church (Acts 11:25, 26).

To some, the word "ordained," so translated in the King James, has been taken to mean the function of a formal ordination board. This is not the intention of the Greek. For example, in Acts 14:23, the word "ordained" is properly translated in the RSV as "appointed." As previously mentioned, this was an appointment of elders (overseers) in each church. This was for local rule, not necessarily for public ministry.

"And when they had ordained (Gr. KATHISTEMI, appointed) them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." - Acts 14:23

This same Greek word is translated "appoint" in reference to the seven chosen to serve tables in Acts 6:3. Also, the same Greek word is found in Titus 1:5...

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

Here is the explanation given by W. E. Vine in *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

"The RSV translates it by 'appoint' in Titus 1:5, instead of 'ordain,' of the elders of whom Titus was to appoint in every city in Crete. Not a formal ecclesiastical ordination is in view, but the appointment, for the recognition of the churches, of those who had already been raised up and qualified by the Holy Spirit, and had given evidence of this in their life and service."

In America we have churches with pastors almost everywhere. But should one lead someone to Christ in a foreign country, where a pastor or church was unavailable, I see no reason why that person could not, or should not, baptize the new convert. When available, the pastor who is the overseer of the church should bear the responsibility of administering the baptisms and the Lord's Supper.

There are many and various circumstances, especially in the remote areas of this world, where baptisms have been administered and the Lord's Supper served by one who is not an ordained minister. Yet, the blessings received are as full and satisfying as those in America performed by those who are ordained. These situations are, of

course, the exceptions and not the standard rule. I believe it would be completely out of order for a Christian who has led someone to Christ to insist upon baptizing them himself, WHEN his pastor is available to do so. This would show nothing less than total disrespect for God's appointed servant. The pastor is entitled to and should bear the responsibility for administering the Ordinance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper when it is possible to do so.

"Let all things be done decently and in order." - 1 Corinthians 14:40

One must remember that customs, manners, and society were vastly different, during Bible times, from what they are today. The custom of laying on of hands as approval and support of God's calling has been formalized into the Ordination Service today. With the many false teachers, today, this is a valued service as it verifies the authenticity of God's man to a church seeking such a pastor. Most churches today will not accept a pastor who has not been ordained by a church or another pastor. Therefore, the liberty of exercising such a practice sends forth much more value than anything that could be said to the contrary.

May we also note that many states require the licensing of a pastor before they are eligible to perform marriages, and may not issue such license unless the individual is ordained. Such was not the case in Biblical times. Not every situation is the same and each should be dealt with on its own merits, and not be a policy that leaves no room for the exception. James 1:5 can surely be our guide...

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

IV. MODE OF BAPTISM

"Submersion, immersion, and emergence" is the meaning of the Greek word "BAPTISMA" (from 'BAPTO', to dip). Is it then proper to administer the Ordinance of Baptism by that of sprinkling, instead of immersion? The answer would be "No," as we shall see. The Greek word for "sprinkle" or "sprinkling," as found in Hebrews 9:13, is the verb "RHANTIZO," which is never used in reference to a Christian's baptism.

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling (RHANTIZO) the unclean..."

Since the Christian's baptism symbolically identifies one's faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; it is, therefore, the Holy Spirit which chose "BAPTISMA" (immersion) instead of "RHANTIZO" (sprinkling).

It should also be noticed that our English words, "baptize, baptism, and baptized" are not a translation from the Greek, but a transliteration. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:16, Paul stated...

"And I baptized (BAPTIZO) also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized (BAPTIZO) any other."

Here the Greek is brought over into the English without the meaning being translated into English. Had the King James Version translated the meaning of "BAPTIZO" into our English, you would then be reading the Verse this way...

"And I immersed (BAPTIZO) also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I immersed (BAPTIZO) any other."

In recapitulation, our English "baptize" is a transliteration from the Greek, "BAPTIZO," which comes from "BAPTA," meaning "to immerse, dip"; derived from a root meaning "deep."

It is interesting that the Holy Spirit would record why John the Baptist was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim...

"And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, BECAUSE there was MUCH WATER there: and they came, and were baptized ("BAPTIZO," immersed)." - John 3:23

Three things become immediately apparent: First, John went where there was "much water." If sprinkling was the method, then this would have been unnecessary. Secondly, notice that "they came." Whoever they were, and wherever they came from, it was because there was not enough water to immerse them. Thirdly, the Greek word, itself, means "immersion"; not "sprinkling."

A. John's Baptism of Christ

This is recorded in Mark 1:9, where we read:

"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized ("BAPTIZO," immersed) of John in Jordan. And straightway coming UP OUT OF THE WATER, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him." (See also Matthew 3:16)

John baptized our Lord by immersion, as it would have been illogical to "come up out of the water" unless you went down under the water! No, John didn't go to the Jordan River, get a pan of water and sprinkle our Lord; he immersed the Lord Jesus.

B. The Ethiopian - Acts 8

Here, Philip had led the eunuch to the Lord and he, in turn, asked Philip what would "hinder me to be baptized." Faith is always the prerequisite for baptism, so Philip put the question to him in Acts 8:37...

"And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

The qualification is met and the baptism is administered in Acts 8:38,39...

"...and they went down both INTO THE WATER, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come UP OUT OF THE WATER, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip..."

As we have previously pointed out, the word "baptized" is the Greek word "BAPTIZO" and means "to immerse"; whereas, an entirely different Greek word is used for sprinkling, "RHANTIZO." It would be illogical to imagine Philip going down into the water, then taking his hand and sprinkling water over the eunuch's head. I have never knew anyone who baptized by sprinkling that went down into a pool of water and administered the ordinance. All I have ever witnessed was done

from a pan or bowl of water--standing on dry ground. No, sprinkling is NOT Biblical baptism, nor does it show the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

There are those who would argue that sprinkling was necessary, since there was not enough water in Jerusalem in which to immerse. In refuting this proposal, may I call your attention to John 9:7...

"And (Christ) said unto him, Go, wash in the POOL OF SILOAM (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

During Hezekiah's reign (2 Chronicles 32:27-30), he tunneled the water from Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam, a distance of about 762 feet in a straight line. Here, alone, was more than enough water to baptize anyone!

Another place where people could have been baptized was at the Pool of Bethesda. John mentions this pool John 5:2,3...

"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt (lame or crippled), withered, waiting for the moving of the water."

Enough water to immerse would have been no problem, here, as this was a spring fed pool within the walls of Jerusalem.

May we also note that that there was enough water to flush the blood of Temple sacrifices down to Brook Kidron, which ran on down into the Dead Sea. Also, there was the Pool of En-Rogel, located south of Jerusalem near the Valley of Hinnom. Today, there is also a well there, over 100 feet deep, called Bir-Aujub, or the Well of Job. Lack of water, as an excuse for sprinkling, fades into oblivion when we check out Jerusalem and the surrounding area. To the sincere child of God who desired to follow the Lord in Biblical baptism, such a place could be found.

I have baptized people in streams, rivers, lakes, as well as the baptismal pool of our church. A strange thing happened when I was baptizing in a creek, many years ago. The church had congregated at the creek site on Sunday afternoon for the baptismal service. Prior to our arrival, the deacons were supposed to have made sure there were no snakes in the immediate area! The first person to be baptized was a young lady and, just as I was about to immerse her, she spotted a water snake swimming by. I spotted the thing about the same time she did and immersed her immediately! That is

the fastest I have ever baptized anyone. Needless to say, she needed no help at all in coming up out of the water, nor did she wait to be escorted back to the shore! I believe that was about as close as I have ever come to seeing anyone walk on water, or should I say, run on water? It can sure put a damper on the service.

One of the first churches I pastored after Bible college was located up north, in a very rural area with no baptismal facilities. Other means had to be used. It was winter, and several had come to know Christ as Savior and wanted to be baptized. All the streams and lakes were frozen, so one of our elders came up with a suggestion; he had just purchased a large, shiny, new watering tank for his cattle. He said he could rig up some kind of device to heat the water and we could baptize in it; and that we did. These people were determined to be baptized no matter what!

The day of service arrived, and it was cold and snowing when we arrived at his farm. The candidates came out, one by one, wearing overalls and plaid shirts--stepping over the side of the tank and into that cold water. You see, the device he was going to use to hook up to heat the water didn't really work out. After they came up out of the cold water, we put a blanket around them and ran them to the house to change clothes and warm up. These, of course, are the odd situations; but, it does show what can happen when a Christian wants to follow his Lord and be obedient in baptism. The good thing about this arrangement--I stood outside of the tank while doing the baptizing. That was the only time I have baptized in a cattle watering tank, and I hope it is the last! These folks surely fulfilled Philippians 4:13 and deserve a double blessing.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Allow me to pose the question, have you obeyed the Lord's command by following Him in being baptized? If not--why not? There will always be the spiritual vacuum that cannot be filled by anything; except giving your testimony, through baptism, of your faith in Jesus Christ.

V. BAPTISM PRIOR TO SALVATION?

This is the most frequently asked question concerning baptism. Should a person be baptized again after they are saved. The answer is, unequivocally, "Yes!" May I list a few of the reasons:

A. Baptism is only for the saved.

The Ethiopian Eunuch asked Philip...

"...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 baptized him." (Acts 8:36-38)

B. Baptism prior to salvation is usually connected with salvation.

We might ask, if a person was baptized prior to salvation, they must have thought it had something to do with salvation, or they would not have been baptized. Peter's words are very fitting for this group...

"...Repent (change your mind), and be baptized (after you are saved, not before) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (BECAUSE OF) the remission of sins..." - Acts 2:38

C. Baptism does not effectuate salvation.

Baptism is a testimony of salvation; therefore, it is meaningless prior to salvation. I was baptized so often before I was saved that I think the frogs knew my Social Security number! When Christ became my Savior, all prior involvement, such as singing in the choir, church membership and attendance, and baptism were absolutely meaningless. When I was baptized after I was saved, this had meaning and fulfillment as I realized this was a testimony of my faith in Christ. I felt good about myself because I was doing what the Lord wanted me to do.

Another question asked, though not as frequently as our first one, is, "What if one was baptized by sprinkling after they were saved?" Personally, I believe any child of God who is sincere, would want to be baptized the way God sets it forth in Scripture; by immersion. The Holy Spirit will always convict, in accordance with His Word, the

conscience of any sincere believer regarding this matter. Then, it becomes their responsibility to God to decide the matter of obedience in Scriptural baptism, by immersion.

VI. VARIOUS BAPTISMS OCCURRING IN THE SCRIPTURE EXAMINED.

A. The Purpose of Christ's Baptism:

Here is the record in Matthew 3:13-15...

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered (permitted) him."

Not only are we going to examine the purpose of Christ's baptism, but to what extent and in what manner it "*fulfilled all righteousness.*" We need to remember that the purpose of Baptism is identification. John's baptism of Christ was to prepare Israel for the acceptance of Christ as their Messiah. It was time for our Lord to publicly identify Himself to Israel (John 1:31). Everything works on God's timetable--to the minute! Notice in Matthew 3:15, when our Lord stated "suffer it to be so NOW." His birth, ministry, and His crucifixion were in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, and fit God's timetable to perfection! By His baptism, He was symbolically showing what He would do on the cross at the conclusion of His earthly ministry. Yes, Israel knew what the prophets had said concerning their Messiah. When He was placed under the water, this actually fulfilled a two-fold purpose: first, to remind Israel of the Old Testament Scripture prophesying of His death...

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet." - Psalm 22:16

Secondly, to identify Himself as the One who would fulfill this on the cross, or, their Messiah. His baptism had publicly announced to Israel that God had given "his only begotten Son" to die on the cross and be resurrected as the payment for the sins of the world; as John bare testimony...

*"...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." -
John 1:29*

The diaspora and persecution of Israel can be attributed to their rejection of Jesus Christ as their Messiah. How sad as we realize, in retrospect, that "He came unto his own (Israel) but his own received him not" (John 1:11). This was the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, spoken of in Matthew 12:31, when he had convicted Israel that Christ was their Messiah and they refused Him.

One may then ask, "How could Israel have accepted Christ and still crucified Him on the cross?" It is true that Christ would have had to go to the cross as payment for the sins of the world, regardless of Israel's acceptance or rejection. The cross was inevitable, but their motive could have made the difference. Unfortunately, their motivation was hatred and rejection as stated by Dr. Luke in Acts 2:23...

"Him (Christ), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by WICKED HANDS have crucified and slain."

On the other hand, they could have accepted Him as their Messiah, declaring their faith as they tearfully placed Him on the cross, proclaiming to all that they would be standing at the tomb three days later, in full anticipation of meeting their Lord in His resurrected body. Therefore, they could have lifted Him up with holy hands of FAITH, instead of wicked hands of unbelief.

Now back to our second question, How Christ's baptism fulfilled all righteousness. Notice, the Scripture says "all righteousness," not "his righteousness." We know our Lord was sinless and remained sinless throughout His life.

"For he hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." - 2 Corinthians 5:21

Since Christ was sinless, His baptism added nothing to His righteousness, for He was God manifest in human flesh. Therefore, since God's Word is righteous and pure, the fulfillment of such would be the evidence. Note Proverbs 30:5...

"Every word of God is PURE; he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."

God's Word had prophesied of Christ's death (Psalm 22:16) and His resurrection (Psalm 16:10). Therefore, Christ's declaration of His identification by baptism proved God's Word to be righteous or pure, which had prophesied of this hundreds of years before; hence, fulfilling all righteousness (God's Word) which spoke of His death, burial and resurrection. His baptism, pointing to the cross, was looked upon as though it was already accomplished. That is why He stated "*to fulfill ALL righteousness,*" for the fulfillment of those prophecies were as good as done. That's the assurance we have today in the sureness, righteousness, and pureness of God's Word. What are you trusting for your salvation, God's infallible Word or the shallowness of man's ideologies?

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." - John 5:24

B. Baptism by John the Baptist (Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1)

The purpose of John's Baptism is made clear by the message he proclaimed. Matthew 3:1-3...

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

His message was to announce to Israel that the Lord Jesus was here, and that He was their King and Messiah. The correct translation of Verse 2 would help clarify this...

"Repent (i.e., change your mind) for the Kingdom of THE HEAVENS is at hand."

The Kingdom was at hand, or presented, because the King was present and at hand. It should be noted that the phrase "kingdom of heaven" is found approximately 38 times and only in the Gospel of Matthew. Without exception, it is used in reference to the glorious Kingdom Age during which Christ will reign and rule as King of kings, with absolute authority. Not only did Christ come to Israel, collectively, as their King; but also, individually, as their Savior, as Matthew 1:21 states...

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: FOR HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS."

When the angel appeared to the shepherds at the birth of Christ, he told them Christ was their Savior, personally. In other words, each one, individually, was responsible for accepting Christ as his Savior.

"For unto you (the shepherds) is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." -Luke 2:11

Yes, He came as King to the nation of Israel; also, as a Savior to each individual Jew which composed that nation. John the Baptist was preparing the way by introducing

Christ as Israel's Messiah, while the Apostles would continue preparing the way to the cross by their message and miracles.

"...Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

John's message was to lead individuals to Christ, and his baptism was to identify saved individuals, publicly, as a testimony of their faith. Mark makes this comment about John in Mark 1:4...

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

"Repentance" here is the Greek "METANOIA" and means "a change of mind for the remission of sins." One may ask, "what sins?" These are the sins resulting from the sin nature every person is born with, which manifest themselves as we grow up. We do not become a sinner when we sin; to the contrary--we sin because we are born a sinner. Romans 5:12 clarifies this...

"Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon ALL men, for that ALL have sinned."

Religion's way of remitting sins is to attempt justification of one's self by self righteousness. The Jewish Pharisees were just such a group. Christ, in addressing them, stated in Luke 16:15...

"And he said unto them, Ye are they which JUSTIFY YOURSELVES before men..."

One either becomes their "own Savior" by attempting self justification; or they accept God's Savior, which is Christ. Those Jews, who believed John's preaching, changed their mind (repented) about their own righteousness and accepted Christ as their Saviour. Then, John baptized them as evidence of their faith and changed mind. A paraphrase of Mark 1:4 would read this way...

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preached that they should change their mind and accept Christ, for the remission of sins, then identify their faith, publicly, by water baptism."

Should we not allow the Holy Spirit to direct us as he did John the Baptist? John proclaimed Christ as Savior in preparing the way to the cross. Our responsibility is the same as we prepare the way of the Lord toward His return at the Rapture, by our witnessing.

C. Christ's Baptism with the Holy Spirit and with Fire. (Matthew 3:11,12; Luke 3:16,17. Mark and John record only the Baptizing with the Holy Spirit).

It is interesting to note the differences in the accounts given by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John concerning John the Baptist. When John preached, there was a multitude of sincere people who came trusting Christ and were baptized. On the other hand, there were the self righteous who came, known as the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Their purpose for coming was not that of sincerity, but to mock and cause trouble. They were claiming Abraham as their father, not Christ, and John knew them well when he addressed them in Matthew 3:9...

"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to (as) our father..."

He addressed the true character of this group; even though "venerated" by religious attire, he called them "vipers"!

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of VIPERS, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" - Matthew 3:7

When addressing those present as "vipers," he also made mention that they would be judged by the Christ they rejected. This is the "baptism of fire" spoken of in Matthew 3:11...

"...he (Christ) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

In Mark we have no record of these "vipers," only those who came in sincerity (Mark 1:5); therefore no mention of judgment (baptism with fire), only the baptism of the Holy Spirit...

"I indeed have baptized you with water: but he (Christ) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

The same is true with the account of Luke and John. In Luke we have the mention of "vipers" (3:7); therefore, both baptism are mentioned, that of the Holy Spirit and that

of fire (judgment). John records no "vipers"; therefore, no baptism of fire, only that of the Holy Spirit (John 1:33).

1. Christ's Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist was the first to mention anything about Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit. This would be elaborated upon later by our Lord, Himself, as the Gospels bare record. John also spoke of many other things to the people, in preparing the way of the Lord, which are not recorded. Later in Christ's ministry, He would reveal more fully these great truths that John had briefly touched on, by way of introduction. After John had just spoken of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire, it is recorded in Luke 3:18 that...

"And many other things in his (John the Baptist's) exhortation preached he unto the people."

It is imperative to understand the difference between the working of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and that of the New Testament. It is equally important to realize that the Gospels are, basically, Old Testament Books; only after the resurrection are we on new Testament ground. Under the Old Covenant, the Holy Spirit never permanently indwelt believers. Christ, in His ministry, revealed a new working of the Holy Spirit which was to be manifested after His return to Glory. In preparing His disciples for the cross, He assures them that He will not leave them comfortless...

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another (Gr. ALLOS, "another like Himself") Comforter, that he (the Holy Spirit) may abide with you FOREVER; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth WITH YOU, and shall be IN YOU." - John 14:16,17

Christ is telling them that the Holy Spirit within them would take the place of the Savior beside them. He then informs His disciples as to the general time the Holy Spirit would come as promised, this being after His ascension to Heaven...

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I DEPART, I will send him unto you."

Until the cross, they knew only the general time that the Holy Spirit would come in fulfillment of His promise. It was not until after Christ's resurrection and His forty days walk with them (Acts 1:3), that He then told the Apostles the more specific time of the Holy Ghost's coming...

"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father (coming of the Holy Spirit), which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with (in) water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." - Acts 1:4,5

This was to be fulfilled in 10 days, on the Day of Pentecost, which ushered in a new dispensation under the New Covenant made on Calvary. The Holy Spirit would now indwell believers, permanently, throughout the Church Age. Every believer would also be baptized, spiritually, into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). We believe Pentecost was the "birthday" of the Church Age which fulfilled Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit's coming. This is evidenced by Acts 2:1,2 where the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's coming is recorded...

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind (Gr. PNEUMA, "Spirit"), and it filled all the house where they were sitting."

The initial fulfillment of Christ's baptizing with the Holy Spirit became a reality on the Day of Pentecost. Each believer has been added to the spiritual Body of Christ ever since. When a person comes to Christ, they are indwelt permanently with the Holy Spirit and baptized into His Body.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into ONE BODY, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into (partake of) one Spirit." - 1 Corinthians 12:13

2. Christ's Baptism with Fire. (Matthew 3:11,12; also Matthew 13:24-30).

"...he (Christ) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and WITH FIRE: Whose fan is in his hand, and he (Christ) will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The "baptism of fire" in Verse 11 is explained in Verse 12. The "wheat" is in reference to the saved as the "chaff" is speaking to the lost. The "garner" is the storehouse and is in reference to God's kingdom. Christ will render this judgment when he returns at the end of the 7-Year Tribulation Period to institute the glorious Kingdom Age for 1,000 years. The word "baptism" in Verse 11 is the Greek "BAPTIZO," which means "identification" and "to dip or immerse." It is used metaphorically of divine judgment upon the lost for rejecting Christ as Saviour. This is the same as the judgment of the nations where Christ will identify the saved and immerse the lost in fire. Christ illustrated this judgment just prior to the cross. Here is the record in Matthew 25:31,32...

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him (Christ) shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."

To the saved, "the wheat," will echo the sweetest words they have heard in this life, spoken by the Lord, Himself, in Verse 34...

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."

To the lost, "the chaff," the Lord will proclaim the most devastating words they have ever encountered in their life. These have been separated from the saved and placed on the left hand as He pronounces their judgment in Verse 41...

"Then shall he (Christ) say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS."

Yes, these have rejected Christ as their Savior, while on the earth; now, our Lord honors their decision by rejecting them for all eternity. Also speaking of this same judgment, are the words of our Lord in Matthew 24:40,41...

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

It should be noted that these two Verse are NOT speaking of the Rapture of the Church, which takes place 7 years earlier. In fact, just the opposite of the Rapture takes place here. May we point out that, at the Rapture, the saved are taken (1 Thessalonians 4:17) and the lost are left to begin the Tribulation judgment. Here in Matthew, at the judgment of the Nations, the lost are taken into judgment while the saved are left to enter the Kingdom.

Remember, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John knew nothing about the Rapture of the Church. This was a mystery revealed later to the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:51,52). Every mention of Christ's Second Coming, in the Gospels, is in reference to His judgment and setting up of the Kingdom at the end of the Tribulation Period. This is what is spoken of by John the Baptist, when he declares Christ's baptism by fire.

D. Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29).

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

Many are the interpretations of this Verse. We shall list a few which we believe to be unfounded and untrue; then examine what we believe to be the correct interpretation.

1. "Baptismal Regeneration," i.e., that God requires baptism to be saved.
2. That a saved person is baptized for a lost person who has died.
3. That a saved person is baptized for a believer who died un-baptized.

To arrive at a proper interpretation, let us begin with the word "baptized." It is the Greek word "BAPTIZO" and means "to immerse by being identified with something or someone." The second thing to notice is that these were Christians who probably had died as a result of their faith. Paul gave testimony in Verse 30,31 of being in jeopardy of losing his life.

"And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (He meant that any day he could lose his life).

In other words, it would be foolish for Paul--or anyone else identifying themselves as a Christian--to risk their lives daily, if there be no resurrection from the dead. For an account of the persecution of Christians, one only has to read *Fox's Book of Martyrs*.

It becomes evident that no one is going to be identified as a Christian, replacing those who died, if there was no resurrection or hereafter. Therefore, "*being baptized for the dead*" simply means that other Christians are going to step forward by proclaiming the Gospel of their faith. The word "baptized" is only used metaphorically, showing identification. "*Baptized for the dead*" could be paraphrased as "being identified as those who are going to work in the place of those who gave their life for their faith."

There have been many great Bible teachers, preachers, missionaries, Sunday School teachers, etc., who have now passed "from death unto life," or into the presence of the Lord. Their gap in the ranks of the Lord's army needs to be filled. Let me ask you, are you willing to be placed into one of these positions left vacant? Are you willing to discipline yourself to allow Christ to fulfill His will in your life? Do you fit Christ into your schedule when convenient, or is Christ first in your life and your schedule arranged around Him? What a need we have today for Christians to be dedicated and unafraid to stand for their faith.

"And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." - Ezekiel 22:30

E. Baptized Unto Moses (1 Corinthians 10:1,2).

Here is the word "baptized" again! I wish the translators would have translated the Greek word "BAPTIZO," instead of just bringing it over and transliterating it with an English spelling. "BAPTIZO" means "identification"; therefore, the Jewish people were identified with Moses as he led them from Egypt, through the Red Sea toward the Promised Land. Moses, of course, did not baptize the Jewish people in the Red Sea, as they marched through on dry land.

"And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left." - Exodus 14:22

This has no reference to water baptism, whatsoever! Moses was never given the command to baptize, but was commanded to administer the rite of circumcision. Circumcision was to Israel, what baptism is to the church. Circumcision was established as a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant as given in Genesis 17:9-10...

"And God said unto Abraham ... This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised."

As Israel identified their faith in God by circumcision, they identified themselves with Moses as their leader. Therefore, "baptized unto Moses" is used metaphorically of Israel being identified with Moses, their leader, taking them through the Red Sea and under the cloud of God's protection.

F. Spiritual Baptism or Water Baptism? (Romans 6:3,4).

"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 (in) 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."

Is this portion of Scripture speaking of water baptism or spiritual baptism? This is surely not a major point over which Christians should sever fellowship, as many fine teachers have opposing views concerning this verse. Should one hold to spiritual baptism, I doubt very much that I would change their mind. Personally, I believe this is referring to water baptism as it speaks of "*being baptized unto His death.*" Spiritual baptism is the act of being placed or "baptized" into His body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..."

We believe this is the same spiritual baptism spoken of in Ephesians 4:4,5...

"There is one body (the Church), and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, ONE BAPTISM."

This does not mean there is no water baptism, but rather only one baptism into the Spiritual Body of Christ. This is absolute proof one is saved eternally! Once we are in the Body of Christ, we are never taken out. It is true that sin takes a Christian out of fellowship with Christ, but never out of His Body or possession. That's why Paul said "one baptism"; therefore, once we are saved, we can never be lost!

This spiritual baptism into Christ's Body is not evidenced by sight or feeling, but by the sureness of God's promise in His Word. This baptism cannot be seen by the lost as evidence of our faith, but water baptism can. Therefore, going to Romans 6, we find that this baptism does show the likeness of what our faith is in--the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This likeness by baptism is a testimony that can be observed by the lost, as to our faith. Romans 6:5 seems to be the key to identifying this as water baptism, and not spiritual...

"For if we have been planted together in the LIKENESS of his death, we shall be also in the LIKENESS of his resurrection"

Spiritual baptism reveals, privately, the result of our faith in Christ's death and resurrection (our position in Christ); while water baptism reveals, publicly, the likeness of His death and resurrection (our testimony for Christ).

Since a Christian has publicly identified themselves as such, it is God's will that one should grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and continue to walk in newness of life. This is what Verse 4 is speaking of, the beginning of our testimony by baptism and the continuation of our testimony evidenced by a changed life.

"Therefore we are buried with him by (in) baptism into (unto) 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

G. The Baptism of Persecution (Matthew 20 and Mark 10).

"But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." - Mark 10:38,39

James and John has just asked the Lord if He would grant them permission to sit next to Him in His Kingdom (Verse 37). For them to have clung so tenaciously to their own righteousness in asking the Lord for the highest position is a little surprising, to say the least! Knowing the future would test their faith to the limit is, no doubt, responsible for the gentle manner in which our Lord rendered His reproof. Such a presumptuous request was probably motivated partly by their closeness with the Lord. They, with Peter, constituted that select triumvirate, "the inner circle," and were the favored three. It was John who was found leaning on Jesus' breast, or sitting next to Him while eating. Just preceding this request, while on the way to Jerusalem, Christ had just informed the Twelve of the persecutions He would shortly experience. You would think they would have been more concerned about the sufferings of their Savior, than the exaltation of themselves.

In dealing with their request, our Lord is going to magnetize their attention to the fact that heavenly positions are determined by our faithfulness down here. It is easy to think of ourselves as great Christians when things are going good; but, the true test of

a Christian's faith is in the midst of trials and persecutions. SO our Lord challenges them with these Words...

"...can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" - Mark 10:38

Again, we call your attention to the Greek word "BAPTIZO" which is used here, and means "identification." In other words, He is asking them if they are willing to be identified with the same persecution He was going to endure. He is drawing their attention back to focus on what He had just stated a few seconds earlier. Here is the record in Mark 10:33,34...

"Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again."

If they wanted one of the highest positions in the Kingdom, they would have to earn it down here! If they followed the Lord, they would be persecuted for the Lord. Our Lord previously stated in John 15:20...

"...If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..."

Yes, Heaven is a free gift (Romans 5:15; Ephesians 2:8,9), but the position we occupy when we get there is determined by our faithfulness here. James and John lacked nothing in confidence, as they answered our Lord without hesitation in Verse 39...

"And they said unto him (Christ), WE CAN..."

What we, as Christians, do for the Lord usually depends upon what we think of the Lord, i.e., a positive attitude and our confidence in Him. We need to learn the words of James and John, "WE CAN!," claiming Philippians 4:13...

" I CAN do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Yes, their claims of confidence did not go unjustified, as their lives did bare witness of their faith. As for James, he was the first of the Apostles to be baptized with the blood of martyrdom, as was his Savior on the cross...

"Now about that time Herod (Agrippa I) the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." - Acts 12:1,2

As for John, he remained faithful in going through all the persecutions that the early church was exposed to; thus, experiencing the struggles and sufferings from the Jews. In latter years, he would be the victim of a bitter persecution under the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD) and banished for his testimony to a small, rocky island in the Aegean Sea, called Patmos. God used Him greatly for his faithfulness in inspiring him to pen five of our New Testament Epistles. According to Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History), he was returned from exile under the brief reign of Nero and died in Ephesus in the reign of Trajan. He was the last of the Apostles and died at age above 90.

Our faithfulness will also bring persecution and ostracism from the world. We are in a battleground, not a playground! Peter informs us of what to expect in 1 Peter 4:12-14...

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

Our challenge from Christ, today, is the same as that spoken to James and John in Mark 10:38...

"...can ye drink of the cup (of persecution) that I drink of? and be baptized (identified) with the baptism (of persecution) that I am baptized with?" - Mark 10:38

Will we answer as they did in Verse 39, "WE CAN"

H. Baptisms (Washings) Under the Law (Hebrews 6:1,2).

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

Here Paul is encouraging these Jewish Christians to leave the "starting line" of salvation and continue to grow on into maturity. In Verse 1, the word "principles" is the Greek "ARCHI" and means "elementary." The word "doctrine" is not the usual Greek word translated "doctrine"; instead, it is the Greek "LOGOS" and means "the word." In other words, they were to leave the elementary teaching of the Word of Christ (i.e. salvation), and go on into maturity ("perfection"). When they were saved, they were justified by Christ's righteousness, not the righteousness of the Law, for "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" - Romans 10:4.

In Verse 2, the word used for "doctrine" is different from the word used in Verse 1. In Verse 2, the Greek "DIDACHE" is used and means "instruction." The word "baptisms" is "BAPTISMOS" and is referring to the ceremonial washings the Jews had practiced under the Law. This is distinct from "BAPTISMA," as used for the ordinance of water baptism. These "baptisms" (washings) are those spoken of in Mark 7:4,8...

"And when they (Jews) come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables ... For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do."

The laying on of the hands may have reference to Exodus 29:10 and Leviticus 8:14, which could have been included in the ceremonies of consecrating the priest. It may also include reference to the practice of the laying on of the priest's hands on the scapegoat in Leviticus 16:20,21. In other words, do not go back to the old practices your fathers did under the Law, for "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.*" These were the "*dead works*" and "*the foundation*" they had previously built upon in Verse One--prior to being saved. It was from this foundation they repented (Greek, "METANOIA," changed their mind) and sought justification through Christ. Allow me to paraphrase the last part of Verse 1; I believe this will shed some light on it's meaning...

"Not laying again the foundation of dead works under the law, from which you previously had changed your mind (repented) and put your faith in God (that is, by accepting God's Word concerning His Son)."

What does Verse 2 mean by the "*resurrection of the dead*" and "*eternal judgment*"? How were they to leave these in proceeding on to maturity? These relate to and would affect ALL mankind; whereas, the "*baptisms*" and "*laying on of the hands*"

were to Israel, ONLY, under the Law. In other words, do not just dwell generally on a resurrection and eternal punishment, for there is much more to be revealed in the New testament concerning both.

The Old Testament didn't say anything about those being resurrected in Matthew 27:52,53, the resurrection bodies at the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51,52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16), the resurrection of the two witnesses in Revelation 11, or any of the specifics spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15, the Great Resurrection Chapter. Let's go on into maturity since we are saved, not reaching back for the ceremonial practices which are no longer valid. Let's not just be satisfied with the basics we have learned, about the resurrection and God's judgment, which is the "milk of the Word"; let us continue to study and learn more.

"For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe." - Hebrews 5:13

We can never be thankful enough for our salvation, that is why in Hebrews 6:1 it does not say "forgetting" but "leaving" the starting line and learning more about God's Word. We have some Christians today who are singing "Standing on the Promises" and doing nothing more than "sitting on the premises"! Only by reading and standing on God's Word can one grow strong enough to lay aside our little "security blankets" of religious practice and traditions which we have previously learned. The only way to grow into a mature Christian is to digest the Word of God.

"But GROW in GRACE, and in the KNOWLEDGE of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." - 2 Peter 3:18

Years ago we had a Jewish man speak in our church, a wonderful Christian with a great testimony for his Savior. One evening my wife prepared the most delicious pork roast for dinner (and the Jewish man was staying with us while speaking in the church). He joined us at the dinner table. Can you believe it, he refused to eat that pork roast; we could not get him to take a bite of that pork roast! I remember kidding him about not being under the Law; but, to no avail--he wouldn't touch that pork roast.

Some ingrained religious practices are hard to remove. Peter was one who had to outgrow the Law after he was saved. God's grace and patience was extended to him as he had to sever the strings that still attached him to the dietary portion of the Law. Concerning the things that were forbidden under the Law, God gave this Word to Peter in Acts 10:13,14...

"And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean."

Yes, Peter was growing by God's grace and in the knowledge of God's Word, as he went on to be a mighty force in God's Army! Growth and maturity will always be relative to the time spent in the Word of God. May I challenge you to honestly examine yourself and see how far you have come toward spiritual maturity since you have been saved.

I. Baptism on the Cross (Luke 12:49,50).

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

With Christ's presence on the earth, a fire was kindled; the fire of human hostility that would stir up separation and persecution against Him and His followers. The fire was ignited by John the Baptist when he announced to Israel...

"...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." -
John 1:29

The self righteous Scribes, lawyers, and Pharisees sought to persecute Him, all through His earthly ministry and to the cross, with undiluted hatred and hostility. Hebrews 4:12 gives us the effect of God's Word on the human mind.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword..."

Yes, standing for our Savior will always cause division with the world, and with friends and close relatives who reject Christ and His Word. Often a fire of opposition will be kindled as a result of witnessing to your parents, brothers and sisters, or other relatives. That is when we realize that the relationship is not the same as it used to be. As a Christian grows, it soon becomes evident they have a much closer relationship with other Christians than they do with their own relatives. Christ prepared His followers for the inevitability of just such occasions in Luke 12:51,53...

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division ... The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter

against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."

Are you standing in silence with the match in your hand, or have you started a fire with a burning desire to proclaim God's Word and identify yourself with Christ? Yes, the Word of God does divide as does the sharp two edged sword. We might well remember Christ's words on the cross, while bearing your sins and mine...

"...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Christ was separated from the Father, while on the cross, so you and I would never be separated from Him in eternity. This is the baptism He was referring to in Verse 50; used, metaphorically, of the cross...

"But, I have (yet future) a baptism to be baptized with."

He was identified with the sinner, being immersed into death with the sins of the world upon Himself. Notice "*I have*," His water baptism had already been accomplished by John the Baptist; thus, this baptism was yet future, upon the cross. It is interesting to note the reason our Lord spoke the words, "*How am I straightened till it be accomplished*" (Verse 50). Here the Greek word for "straightened" is "SUNECHO" and out of twelve occurrences in the New Testament, is used nine times by Luke. It means "constrain, hold in or pressed in." For example, in Luke 22:63, the Greek word "SUNECHO" is translated "held."

"And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him."

What was constrained or held, concerning Christ, prior to His going to the cross? We believe this was the power of His deity, which He could have exercised to prevent His being placed on the cross. As Christ was Perfect God as well as Perfect Man, He possessed all the attributes of deity (God). Revelation 1:18 makes this clear...

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell (the position) and of death (the condition)."

The Lord Jesus Christ has the power to take any life at any time He so desires. No power on earth could have put Christ on the cross, or kept Him there, had this not been His will. In Matthew 27:40,42 they challenged our Lord on the cross with these words...

"...If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross ... He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him."

Not only could He have come down from the cross, He could have struck everyone of them dead in an instant. Only because of His love did He restrain or withhold Himself from doing this. There is no question as to the power of His deity; if He could resurrect a dead body back to life, He could surely take a live body and render it dead! Which is more difficult, to kill a live body or bring a dead body back to life? Our Lord had this to say of Himself in John 10:17,18...

"...I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again..."

His divine love for the Crown of His Creation, Humanity, was what restrained Him from destroying all who sought His destruction. His love is the answer to our Verse in Question...

"How am I straightened (restrained or His power withheld) till it (the cross) be accomplished?" (Because of His love!)

VII. BAPTISM IN ITS ORDER

Baptism, of course, is important as it is commanded of God as an ordinance for the church to be followed by each believer. However, it must be kept in its rightful place, not prior to salvation as the means of securing salvation, but AFTER salvation as a testimony OF our salvation. Salvation is first and foremost in God's Word. Paul had to remind the carnal Corinthians that Christ is the essential One. Notice in 1 Corinthians 1:17...

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

The Corinthians had taken their eyes off of following the Lord and were priding themselves in following some of the noted men. This had caused a lot of division among the Christians in Corinth...

"For it hath been declared unto me (Paul) ... that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephass; and I of Christ." - 1 Corinthians 1:11,12

Some, no doubt, were bragging about being baptized by Paul, thinking this might add some credibility to their status. Since Paul's desire and purpose was to point people to Christ, not himself, he answers their pride filled condition in 1 Corinthians 1:13-15...

"Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name."

Since they had placed Paul on a pedestal instead of esteeming Christ, Paul expresses his sorrow that he baptized any of them. His sole desire was to exalt Christ, and not himself. How easy it is, as did the Corinthians, to allow pride to get our priorities in reverse. Paul did his best to correct this problem when he wrote to them, saying in Verse 17...

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel..."

This is in perfect harmony with the Great Commission given in Matthew 28:19,20. Notice that winning them to Christ is first, baptism second, and teaching is third, which enables them to grow into maturity.

"Go ye therefore, and teach (Greek, "MATHETEUS") all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching (Greek, "DIDASKO") them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

The mistranslation of "teach" in the KJV has caused some confusion. Here the Greek verb, "MATHETEUS," is the word for "disciple." Being used in the transitive sense and active voice, it should be translated "go make disciples of" all nations. It is not translated "teach" anywhere else in the New Testament. The same Greek word used as a noun, "MATHETES," is translated "disciple" in over 250 other places in the New Testament. The word "teaching" is the Greek verb, "DIDASKO," and is correctly translated as such. In other words, this is the procedure given us by our Lord in its rightful order, for us to follow...

1. *"Go ye therefore and make (make disciples of) all nations," i.e., win the lost to Christ.*

"And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." - Luke 14:23

2. *"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost..." The new Christian is then to be baptized as his public declaration of his new life in Christ, as Romans 6:4 states...*

"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."

3. *"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." No Christian ever grows without studying God's Word, as 2 Peter 3:18 states...*

"But grow in grace (God's patience while we grow), and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

Acts 20:32 also emphasizes the importance of God's Word in our growth...

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up..."

Only when we keep things in their right perspective can we expect God's blessings. Should you be one who has never been baptized since you were saved, then you need not put it off any longer. Obedience brings fellowship and blessings. Yes, the Christian may have the REST of salvation, but be void of the REST which results from being obedient to the Lord. Matthew 11:28-30 emphasizes the importance of both...

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I (the Lord) will give you REST."

This is salvation and the rest the Christian experiences knowing he has a home in Heaven and his sins are forgiven. Notice, it is all from the Lord, "I (the Lord) will give you rest."

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find REST unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This "rest" depends, not on the Lord, but upon the faithfulness of the Christian. Notice, "take my yoke" and "ye shall" is the responsibility of the believer.

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Being disobedient by not following the Lord in the ordinance of water baptism will leave the mind and soul of that Christian in a state of unrest. Should we not get our priorities in their proper perspective, and as Joshua said in Joshua 24:15...

"...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Then we will experience the "rest" spoken of in Matthew 11:29 and the...

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

CONCLUSION:

The most important question any person will ever answer is..."Am I going to Heaven when I die?" Can you answer that question in the affirmative? Without a single doubt or question? If you cannot, then something is wrong; because the salvation Christ gives renders void any doubt whatsoever.

God's salvation was purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered as a free gift. You see, every human being has sinned (Romans 3:23), and the wages of that sin is death (eternal Hell). Sin must be paid for. Should one choose to make their own payment for sin, then they will be separated from Christ for all Eternity; confined to a place called "Sheol" in the Old testament, "Hades" in the New Testament, and "Hell" in the English language. God will then honor your decision and accommodate your desire as you stand, trembling, when the One you rejected pronounces your sentence from Matthew 25:41...

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, prepared for the devil and his angels"

On the other hand, Christ is *"not willing any should perish"* (2 Peter 3:9); therefore, He went to the cross, Himself, to pay for the sins of all humanity--past, present, and future. Christ gave His life on the cross, unto death, to save your life and mine from eternal death in Hell. If you will accept Christ's payment for your sin by trusting what He did for you, He then promises you two things: one, you will never perish; two, you will possess everlasting life.

Notice how simple God's salvation is:

1. A Gift That Is Received By Faith.

"For by grace are ye saved through FAITH; and that not of yourselves: it is the GIFT of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." - Ephesians 2:8,9

2. A Promise That Cannot be Broken.

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son (Jesus Christ), that whosoever believeth in him **SHOULD NOT PERISH, but HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.**" (John 3:16)*

3. A Security That Cannot Be Shaken.

" These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13)

If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then do it right now--right where you are--before it is too late. If, after reading this, you have accepted Christ as your Savior; I would appreciate rejoicing with you. Please feel free to write me and let me know of your decision.

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APPENDIX A.

Dr. John R. Rice's Quote on "The King James Translation of Acts 2:38"

To quote Dr. John R. Rice, a noted scholar, from his book, Filled With the Spirit, The Book of Acts, A Verse-by-Verse Commentary: "The King James translation of Acts 2:38 '...be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...' is unfortunate and inaccurate. The little Greek preposition eis, translated for, is an indefinite preposition of reference. It does not mean in order to. If Peter had commanded the people to be baptized in order to receive the remission of sins, he would have needed to use the Greek preposition hina, which means in order to. He did not use the Greek word.

This little preposition eis, used about 1,800 times in the New testament in Greek, is variously translated, for, at, toward, unto, into, etc. So it could be translated for, as here, only in the sense of 'on the basis of,' or 'on the ground of,' so Dr. A.T. Robertson explains.

Even in English the preposition for does not necessarily mean in order to. Often for means 'on the basis of,' or 'on the ground of.' Thus one is scolded for being late, or arrested for stealing, or praised for beauty, or rewarded for bravery, or paid for work. In that sense only is one 'baptized for the remission of sins,' i.e., baptized for remission of sins already obtained when one repented.

Acts 2:38 does not give a new plan of salvation. Acts 10:43 says, 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' So John 3:36 says, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.' So say many other Scriptures. One who trusts in Christ has, immediately, everlasting life."