

Short Studies for the Skeptic Series – Part 5

Root Elements of the Law Found in the Kingdom Gospel

In this study, we're looking at how certain elements of the O.T. 'gospel' bled over into the gospel of the kingdom proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus & His Apostles.

The covenant of circumcision was established with Abraham, one of the founding fathers of Israel... **Gen 17:9-14** And God said unto Abraham, **Thou shalt keep my covenant** therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. ¹⁰ **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**. ¹¹ And **ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin**; and **it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you**. ¹² And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, **he that is born in the house**, or **bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed**. ¹³ **He that is born in thy house**, and **he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised**: and **my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant**. ¹⁴ And **the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant**.

Getting directly to the point, circumcision was a mandate in being identified with Abraham's 'people'. Similarly, mandates (commandments, ordinances, statutes, etc.) were put in place at the institution of the Mosaic Covenant in which if broken, souls would be cut off from the now established nation of Israel. Offerings for sins were made for those within the nation, so separation from the congregation was a **BIG** deal! (Lev 4; 7; 23).

One such ordinance/statute was the water of separation... **Num 19:9** And a man *that is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay *them* up without the camp in a clean place, and **it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin**. **Num 19:20** **But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation**, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the **water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean**.

Yep! We're going to deal with the 'Elephant in the Room', one of the most controversial topics in Christendom, baptism w/water.

Easily provable & traceable, baptism w/water was a '**water of separation**' confronting the nation of Israel in an anticipated Davidic kingdom (Matt 21:9). Acknowledging the notion that there's always an exception to the rule, to make sense out of this component of the kingdom gospel, we're temporarily ignoring the fact that He Who had the power to speak forgiveness of sins **never** performed baptism w/water... **John 4:1-2** When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, ² (**Though Jesus himself baptized not**, but his disciples,). **Mark 2:7** Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? **who can forgive sins but God only?**

Typically, when asked why one was baptized w/water or the purpose thereof, a response is given that lies outside of what's demonstrated in the scriptures. Like most doctrine, the layperson simply conveys one's denomination's position. What follows is a timeline for consideration in rethinking what you may have been led to believe about baptism w/water:

A. John the Baptist's Message

John the Baptist preached the **baptism of repentance for the remission of sins**. **Justifying God** was based on either **accepting** or **rejecting** John's baptism.

Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and **preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins**. **Luke 7:29-30** And **all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.** ³⁰ **But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.**

B. Jesus' Disciple's Pre-Cross Ministry

Jesus' disciples baptized more disciples than John the Baptist; **John 4:1** When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard **that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John**

C. Jesus' Apostles' Post-Cross Commission

Believing & being baptized w/water was the gospel commissioned in the post-cross ministry of the Apostles.

Mark 16:15-16 And he said unto **them**, Go **ye** into all the world, and **preach the gospel to every creature**. ¹⁶ **He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved**; but **he that believeth not shall be damned**.

D. Peter's Mandate w/Promise for Israel

Peter's mandate for the nation of Israel was **repentance & baptism**, in the **name of Jesus Christ**.

Acts 2:36-38 Therefore let **all the house of Israel** know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, **whom ye have crucified**, both Lord and Christ. ³⁷ Now when **they** heard *this*, **they** were pricked in **their** heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, **what shall we do?** 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, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost**.

The promise that followed Peter's command was... "**Repent ye** therefore, and **be converted**, that **your sins may be blotted out**, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰ And **he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:**" **Acts 3:19-20**

Did Christ return? Why not? Answering that question is essential in understanding transitioning during the book of Acts!

E. Saul's (Paul) Conversion Recorded in Acts 9

Having been blinded by the Lord, Paul **first** received his sight **followed** being baptized by a **devout man according to the law: Acts 22:12-13** And one Ananias, a **devout man according to the law**, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*, ¹³ Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. **Acts 9:18** And **immediately** there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and **was baptized**.

F. Acts 10, Peter Baptizes a God-Fearing Gentile's Household

Acts 10:22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. **Acts 10:34-35** Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: ³⁵ But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

The Holy Ghost was poured out on this household **BEFORE** being baptized w/water, in the 'name of the Lord'; exactly **OPPOSITE** of Acts 2:38. **Acts 10:45** And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, **because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts 10:47-48** Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? ⁴⁸ **And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord...**

G. Paul's Priority Preaching the Cross Over Baptism w/Water

Unlike the Apostles who were **SENT** to baptize, Paul's priority was preaching the gospel of the cross... **1Cor 1:16-17** And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, **I know not whether I baptized any other.** 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.**

H. Paul's Statement of Faith – One Baptism

Addressing converted uncovenanted Gentiles (Eph 2:11-12), who were deemed as heathen under the O.T., Paul laid out the Statement of Faith for the body of Christ. ***In context***, the '**one baptism**' is the baptism '**by**' the Spirit into the Body of Christ... "Therefore **if any man be in Christ, he is** a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." **2Cor 5:17**

Eph 4:4-6 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as **ye** are called in one hope of **your calling**; ⁵ One Lord, one faith, **one baptism**, ⁶ One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in **you all**.

Eph 2:14 For he is **our peace**, who hath **made both one**, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;

1Cor 12:13 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. Gal 3:26-28 For **ye are all** the children of God **by faith in Christ Jesus.** ²⁷ For as many of **you** as have been **baptized into Christ have put on Christ.** ²⁸ 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. Rom 6:3-5** Know **ye** not, that so **many of us** as were **baptized into Jesus Christ** were **baptized into his death?** ⁴ 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. ⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection:

I. Baptism w/Water During the Millennium Among the Nations

Matt 28:19-20 Go **ye** therefore, and **teach all nations, baptizing them** in the **name** of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ **Teaching 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.

Jesus, Israel's Messiah, '**set**' Himself before His disciples on a mountain to then give instructions relating to the earthly kingdom of heaven... **Matt 5:19** Whosoever therefore shall break **one of these least commandments**, and **shall teach men so**, he shall be called the **least in the kingdom of heaven:** but whosoever shall **do and teach them**, the same shall be called **great in the kingdom of heaven.**

The Beatitudes (Matt 5:1 – 8:1) are often treated as the end-all of needed biblical instructions. In reality, the Sermon on the Mount will be the Statement of Faith to the Nations, as Paul's Statement of Faith is to the Body of Christ today. Unlike the Apostle's post-cross commission in Mark 16, (C), a focus of the so-called 'Great Commission' is teaching. The Beatitudes were the apostles' doctrine... **Acts 2:42** And they continued stedfastly in the **apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

It should also be reminded that Jewish believers were still keeping the law... **Acts 21:20** And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how **many thousands of Jews there are which believe;** and **they are all zealous of the law:**

The key to understanding baptism w/water in the '**name**' (singular) of the Father, Son & Holy Ghost is found in Zechariah 14; context being the future kingdom... "And the **LORD shall be king over all the earth:** in that day shall there be **one LORD**, and **his name one.**" **Zech 14:9**

Final Thoughts for Consideration

There are many different baptisms in the Bible; 3 alone mentioned in Mat 3:11 (water; Holy Ghost & fire). Baptism **'with'** the Holy Ghost is not to be confused with baptism **'by'** the Spirit. Being baptized w/the Holy Ghost was evidenced by signs following (Mk 16:7). Having been baptized w/water wasn't simply a matter of testimony and there's zero evidence that the baptizer or baptized ever thought that baptism was a picture of the death, burial & resurrection of Christ; a view held by various baptistic churches & denominations. If baptized, which baptismal formula was used in your baptism w/water?

In Part 6 of this series, we're going to point out the similarities & distinctions between Paul's & Peter's gospels.