

The Bible versus the “Church of Christ”

Baptism: Part One Holy Spirit Baptism or Water Baptism?

Introduction:

1. This series of lessons is investigating the claims of a pamphlet titled: “The Bible versus the ‘Church of Christ’.”
2. The first lessons dealt with fundamental teaching about the church.
 - a. It is the spiritual body of Christ, but not a denomination.
 - b. Its name is important, and “church of Christ” is a scriptural one.
 - c. Its existence has continued since the Day of Pentecost.
3. The next accusations made against the church of Christ had to do with the worship of God.
 - a. Instrumental music in worship to God is not authorized under the New Testament.
 - b. God commands congregational singing – no other type of music is approved for worship.
 - c. The Lord’s Supper is to be observed every first day of the week.
4. The next criticisms have to do with the role of baptism in God’s plan of salvation.

I. Baptismal Regeneration?

- A. **The Accusation:** *“Of the many heresies taught by the Church of Christ, Baptismal Regeneration is probably the most well known (sic), and also the most harmful. This is the ancient pagan belief that a person must be baptized in water in order to receive cleansing from sin and the right to enter Heaven.”*
- B. **The Response:** *While this belief is ancient, it is neither pagan nor heretical.*
 1. This belief is ancient because it is found in the Bible, though misunderstood by many.
 2. This belief is not a heresy because it is taught in the Bible, though misunderstood by many.
 3. There is a notion in the denominational world that to believe that baptism is essential to salvation is a form of pagan idolatry.
 - a. They argue that when one worships parts of Creation – the natural world – he becomes guilty of idolatry.
 - i. Certainly, this is true, for the Bible states it.
 - ii. Deuteronomy 4:16-19; Romans 1:22-24; etc.
 - b. Then, they declare that believing in the essential nature of baptism is equal to worshipping the water in which one is immersed!
 - i. “In teaching that water baptism saves, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is a form of worshipping creation and not the Creator.”
 - ii. **“Whoever or whatever we look to as our source of salvation is our God or god.”**
 - iii. “If we look to Christ alone as our Lord and Savior, we acknowledge Him as God. If we look to water (used in water baptism) for salvation, we deny Christ as Lord and Savior, and worship created things (water, ourselves, etc.)”
 - iv. References are made to practices of the Babylonians and those who worshipped Isis, Mithra and Odin.
 - v. flockalert.wordpress.com/2009/07/28/pagan-roots-of-baptismal-regeneration/
 - c. So, believing in “water salvation” is idolatry for it excludes “God salvation.”
 3. Of course, this idea is both false and ridiculous.

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- a. Did Peter reject God when he taught “water salvation” (1 Pet. 3:20)?
- b. Did Noah reject God when he practiced “ark salvation”?
 - i. Noah was saved by grace (Gen. 6:8; 8:1).
 - ii. Noah was saved by love (Gen. 6:17-18).
 - iii. Noah was saved by faith (Hebrews 11:7).
 - iv. Noah was saved by obedience (Gen. 6:9, 22; 7:5).
 - v. Noah was saved by truth (Gen. 6:13-16).
 - vi. Noah was saved by water (1 Peter 3:20).
 - vii. None of these things exclude the others – or God.
- c. Did Naaman reject God when he practiced “water healing” (2 Kin. 5:14)?
- d. Did Israel reject God when they practiced “water salvation” (1 Cor. 10:1-2)?
- e. Did the blind man reject God when he practiced “water healing” (John 9:7, 11)?
4. If God commands baptism, the only way one can follow and obey Him is by being baptized!
5. Yet, when one is baptized, he does not believe that the power of salvation is in the water.
 - a. The power to forgive belongs to God.
 - b. The power to forgive is found in the blood of Jesus.
 - c. Yet, one contacts that blood and accesses that power in baptism.
6. Thus, this “ancient” belief is not pagan nor heretical.
- C. “Baptismal Regeneration” must be correctly defined and Biblically explained.
 1. Definitions:
 - a. “The theological doctrine that regeneration is effected in and through Christian baptism” (Miriam-Webster).
 - b. “The doctrine that regeneration and sanctification are received in and through baptism” (dictionary.reference.com)
 2. Regeneration is a Bible word, appearing twice in the New Testament (Matthew 19:28; Titus 3:5).
 - a. The Greek word, *paliggenesia* (παλιγγενεσια), is a compound word.
 - b. *Palin* means, “Anew, again, or once more.”
 - c. *Genesis* means, “Nature, nativity, birth; origin, source, or life.”
 - d. Thus, regeneration refers to the production of a new life, a new birth, or the renewal or “restoration of a thing to its pristine state.”
 - e. In Matthew 19:28, it is used of the Gospel Age – a time of regeneration due to the preaching of the Apostles’ doctrine.
 - f. In Titus 3:5, it refers to the washing by which sins are cleansed and a soul is saved.
 3. The Bible teaches that spiritual regeneration is connected to baptism.
 - a. Regeneration requires a washing (Titus 3:5).
 - b. This is a washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26).
 - c. This is being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:3-5).
 - d. This is a washing away of sin by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11).
 - e. This is a washing away of sin by baptism (Acts 22:16).
 - f. This is a washing of our bodies in water (Hebrews 10:22).
 - g. This is a washing away of sin by Jesus’ blood (Revelation 1:5; 7:14).
 4. This is “blood salvation,” but baptism is required to contact the blood.
- D. “Baptismal Regeneration” is a Biblical doctrine; but, the power of salvation is not in the water – only the blood of Jesus can wash away sins.

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II. Holy Spirit Baptism or Water Baptism?

- A. **The Accusation:** “[*The Church of Christ believes*] that ‘*be baptized*’ means to be ‘*immersed in water.*’ This is where ALL Church of Christ people err so greatly. Church of Christ members are taught that there is only ONE kind of baptism: WATER baptism. ...*The Church of Christ wants you to think that all baptisms in the Bible are WATER baptisms, for this will cause you to think that Galatians 3:27 and Romans 6:3-4 are referring to water baptisms when they are NOT.*”
- B. **The Response:** *There are several things that must be addressed in this statement.*
1. First, “Church of Christ members” are not taught what to believe; we study for ourselves!
 2. Next, the Greek word for baptism (*baptizo* [βαπτίζω]) means, “To immerse.”
 - a. This immersion is not always in water.
 - b. The New Testament mentions seven different baptisms.
 - i. John’s baptism Matthew 3:1-6
 - ii. Jesus’ baptism John 3:22, 26; 4:1-2
 - iii. Holy Spirit baptism Matthew 3:11; Acts 2; 10 – 11
 - iv. Baptism of fire Matthew 3:11-12
 - v. Baptism of suffering Matthew 20:22; Luke 12:50
 - vi. Baptism of Moses 1 Corinthians 10:2
 - vii. Gospel baptism Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; etc.
 - c. We know that all baptisms mentioned in the Bible were not water baptisms.
 3. However, by the time the book of Ephesians was written, all but one of these baptisms had ceased (Ephesians 4:5).
 4. The Bible teaches that today, there is one – and only one – baptism.
 - a. Both John’s and Jesus’ baptisms ended at the cross (Acts 19:1-7).
 - b. The baptism of fire is eternal punishment in Hell.
 - c. The baptism of suffering was endured by Jesus, James and John.
 - d. The baptism of Moses was under the Old Testament.
 5. This leaves only two options – Holy Spirit baptism or Gospel baptism.
- C. **The Accusation:** “[*There is one baptism which is far more important than water baptism, and this baptism is the SPIRIT baptism that the new Christian receives when he receives Christ as Saviour. ...The Spirit of God baptizes, or immerses, the new believer into the spiritual body of Christ. This has nothing to do with water baptism, for there is no water anywhere in 1 Corinthians 12:13.*”
1. First, the Bible nowhere teaches that every new Christian receives Holy Spirit baptism.
 2. Also, if Holy Spirit baptism is the “one baptism,” then water baptism must not be practiced.
 - a. Nearly all denominational groups who deny that baptism is essential for salvation, teach that one should be baptized.
 - b. In fact, Mr. Melton wrote: “*Baptism is important, and all true believers should submit to water baptism (Acts 10:47; 8:37-38; Mt. 28:18-20), but trusting water baptism for salvation is a terrible and unscriptural mistake.*”
 - c. If the Bible says that there is “one baptism,” why does Mr. Melton practice two?
 3. Furthermore, if baptism is an immersion, in what is the new Christian immersed when the Spirit of God baptizes him or her?
 4. Finally, if water baptism is the “one baptism,” then there is water in 1 Corinthians 12:13.

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- D. **The Response:** *The “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5 is immersion in water for the remission of sins, not Holy Spirit baptism.*
1. Holy Spirit baptism is administered by Jesus – and no one else (Matthew 3:11; John 1:33; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 1:5; 2:33).
 - a. However, Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize others whom they taught (Matthew 28:18-20).
 - b. Since men cannot baptize others in the Holy Spirit, the command of Jesus must be for water baptism (cf. Acts 8:19-22).
 - c. Since Jesus commanded His followers to baptize people in water, this must be done in order to obey and please Him.
 - d. Since there is only one baptism today, it must be water baptism – for, it is commanded by the Lord.
 - e. Holy Spirit baptism is not commanded, nor is it promised to all Christians.
 2. Holy Spirit baptism was prophesied (Joel 2:28ff; Acts 2:1-4, 16).
 3. Holy Spirit baptism was promised (Matthew 3:11; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5).
 4. Holy Spirit baptism was powerful (Acts 2:17) – immersion in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. They were not immersed in the Holy Spirit Himself (cf. Luke 11:13; Matthew 7:11 – *the giver is metaphorically put for the gifts*).
 - b. The Holy Spirit is a person, not a “thing” in which one can be immersed.
 5. Holy Spirit baptism was particular – limited to only specific individuals.
 - a. The apostles (Acts 1:1-5; 1:26 – 2:4, 14, 37)
 - b. The household of Cornelius (Acts 11:15-16)
 - c. This fulfilled Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:17)
 6. Holy Spirit baptism was purposeful.
 - a. To enable the apostles to do their work (Mark 9:1; John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:8)
 - b. To prove one’s acceptance by God
 - i. Confirm apostles’ doctrine
 - ii. Confirm acceptance of Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48; 11:17-18)
 - c. It was not for the purpose of salvation (Acts 11:14-15).
 7. All of these aspects of Holy Spirit baptism were fulfilled by AD 41 at the house of Cornelius.
 8. About 20 years later, Paul wrote that there is one baptism.
 9. Thus, by that time Holy Spirit baptism must have ended for water baptism continues to this day.
 10. Holy Spirit baptism never added anyone to the spiritual body of Christ, but water baptism does (Acts 2:37-38, 41, 47).
 11. Therefore, there is water in 1 Corinthians 12:13; for, only water baptism can put one into the body of Christ (cf. Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27).
- E. Immersion in water is essential for one to receive remission of sins – because the Lord commanded it in His New Covenant.