



LESSON SIX – THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS (WATER)

**The Doctrine of Baptisms
(Water Baptism)**

Our foundational stone of the next two lessons (6 & 7) is that of the doctrine of baptisms (plural). The new birth of John 3:5 requires two baptism – one of water and one of spirit. This is the same two baptisms spoken of by Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38. Throughout the book of Acts we see both water and spirit joined in conversion. It is important to understand that the design of water and spirit baptism is not strictly a New Testament doctrine, but the typology is firmly grounded in the Old Testament. For example, in 1 Corinthians 10 Paul refers to the coming out of Egypt and of the Israelites being baptized by Moses.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea

An Examination of the New Birth

The “new birth” did not exist before the day of Pentecost. Although David speaks of having the Holy Spirit, and the Bible tells us that John the Baptist and others had the Holy Spirit, these do not refer to the baptism of the Holy Spirit spoken of in the book of Acts. We know this because *THAT* “baptism” was the “promise of the father” that Jesus spoke about in Acts 1:5 and plainly declares that the disciples were yet to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit – “for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence”. This spirit baptism could not take place until after the resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ (John 7:39) – “for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified.” We will discuss more of this in Lesson Seven.

However, water baptism was already in use by John the Baptist and in accordance with Jesus’s final command in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16, water baptism was to continue after his death, burial and resurrection as a part of the gospel to be preached throughout the world. It is interesting however, that just as the Red Sea was considered a baptism unto Moses, there are many typologies in the Old Testament for water baptism. But let us first of all consider John 3:1-5 about the New Birth. It reads:

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The elements of the “new birth” are *water and spirit*. Some teach that the elements of the new birth are faith and repentance. Not so! It is water and spirit. Others teach that “water” refers to the natural birth, and “spirit” refers to the spiritual birth. By using this logic, it makes the natural birth a requirement of salvation, because being born of the water is essential in order to enter into the kingdom of God. This is very skewed thinking, especially when there is so much evidence that water baptism and spirit baptism is joined so many times in conversion as well as in many other scriptures.

Consider for example this scripture in 1 John 5:6 - 9:



This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

The water, blood, and spirit are the major elements of salvation. These three elements correspond to the “death, burial, and resurrection” of Jesus Christ. We see “blood, water, spirit” – “death, burial, resurrection” – “brazen alter, brazen laver, holiest of holies”; all of these which demonstrate the pattern or plan of salvation.

Old Testament Types of Water Baptism

There are several types of water baptism mentioned in the Old Testament. One was clearly called a type of baptism in 1 Corinthians 10 when Paul speaks of the “baptism in the cloud and in the sea” as the children of Israel came out of Egypt. Consider this fact – that after the Israelites left Egypt, Pharaoh’s army pursued them as far as the Red Sea. When the Lord made the path through the sea, the Israelites passed over. It wasn’t until they were on the other side that they were truly free of Pharaoh’s grasp. Then notice that the Egyptian army (Egypt representing sin) was “destroyed” in the water. A second type was that of Noah’s flood. Again, the Bible expressly declares this to be a type of water baptism. It goes one step further, the Bible

declares that baptism “saves us”. Look at I Peter 3: 18-21:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, 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 water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Note that it was the ark that was the instrument of salvation, but what did the “water” do? What was the purpose of the flood? It was the water that purged, or cleansed, the world from sin. When Peter writes that the baptism was not for the putting away of the filth of the flesh – this is correct. The Holy Spirit was given to deal with the flesh. The water baptism was given to deal not with the nature of sin (flesh), but the record of sin.

But one of the most beautiful types of water baptism in the Old Testament is found in Leviticus 14: 1-6. This is the ceremony for the cleansing of the leper. Leprosy is a type of sin. It is (1) in the flesh, and (2) consumes the body slowly but eventually wholly, and (3) it eventually leads to death. In Leviticus it states that the ceremony for cleansing followed the fact of the healing. Just as repentance must precede water baptism, the priest had to determine that the leper was first healed before the steps were taken to pronounce the leper clean.



And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest: And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper; Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop: And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water: As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.

Once the priest determined that the leprosy was healed (the sinning had stopped), he then took a live bird and dipped it (baptized) in water which was mixed with the blood of a bird that had been killed. Then the live bird that had been thus baptized was set free. This is a beautiful type of water baptism. Just as it was a bird for a bird, salvation is one man dying for another – but the man who remained alive is dipped (baptized) in water which has been mixed with the blood (of Jesus Christ).

Is Water Baptism Essential for Salvation?

I once presented the plan of salvation to a group of elders in a Trinitarian Pentecostal church. After discussing water baptism and spirit

baptism, one of them commented -- "Brother Davis, we believe that water baptism is necessary. We just don't believe it is essential." The difference between "necessary" and "essential" is still a mystery to me, especially in light of the scriptures that follow.

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 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. -- *Now if a person is not "buried" with Christ, how then is he "raised up"?*

Mark 16:16 -- There are many who read this scripture backwards. Instead of "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved", it is read "he that believeth and is saved shall be baptized." Even most fundamental churches teach that a person is saved at the time of believing, and then they simply get baptized "because" they are saved.

I Peter 3:21 plainly states that baptism save us.

Acts 2:38 -- Peter declared that water baptism was for everyone. He stated, "Repent and be baptized *every one of you*". He did not say "Repent and be baptized, only if you have accepted Jesus", or "Repent and be baptized everyone except the thief on the cross." In reference to the thief on the cross, it is important to understand that water baptism is associated with the gospel of Jesus Christ (the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus



Christ). The thief on the cross did not have the gospel to obey for Jesus had not died at that time.

Luke 7:29-30 -- The Pharisees are denounced in scripture as having rejected the counsel of God for refusing the baptism of John.

Matthew 21: 23-37 -- When the Pharisees asked Jesus by what authority he did his works, he countered with a question of his own, "The baptism of John, was it from Heaven or from men?" The answer was obvious even to the Pharisees that baptism came from Heaven. My question -- If the baptism of John was from Heaven, from whence did Paul get his baptism when he re-baptized the disciples of John in

Acts 19? And was the baptism preached by Peter and the apostles from Heaven or from men?

Matthew 28:19 -- Wasn't baptism a commandment of Jesus Christ and to be performed as a part of the Great Commission? Then how can we say that it is not essential?

Acts 2:38 -- If baptism is for "the remission (or forgiveness) of sin", how can we have forgiveness of sins without it? The very fact that Cornelius in Acts 10:44-48 was commanded to receive baptism after he received the Holy Spirit should indicate its importance and necessity.

In each recorded incident in the book of Acts where someone was converted, water baptism was always a part of that conversion.

- Acts 2 -- on the day of Pentecost, the Jews were baptized
- Acts 8:12-17 the Samaritans were baptized
- Acts 8:26-40 the Ethiopian Eunuch believed and was baptized
- Acts 10: 44-48 Cornelius and his household were baptized
- Acts 9: 17-18 / Acts 22:12-16 -- Paul, the apostle was baptized
- Acts 16: 14-15 Lydia was baptized and her household
- Acts 16: 25-34 The jailer at Philippi and his household were baptized
- Acts 19:1-6 The disciples at Ephesus were baptized.

Does it matter how one is baptized?

Brother E.L. Holley, one of the most powerful apostolic preachers in this day summed it well when he said, "If it doesn't matter how you are baptized, it doesn't matter if you are baptized." Amen.

Water baptism should be done by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ. Although Matthew 28:19-20 speaks of baptism in the name of the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit, this scripture is not in "contrast" to Acts 2:38 and the many other scriptures which indicated that the apostles baptized using the name of Jesus Christ, but it is "complimentary" in explaining who Jesus Christ really is. Water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is best understood when we understand the importance of that name above every name. The argument here is not about water -- it is about the name of Jesus.

If I were to go to China and tell someone that I was going to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost -- they might wonder -- "well who is the father"? Jesus, however plainly declared that remission (or forgiveness) of sins was to be preached in HIS NAME. Even the



word "God" is not a proper noun. He must be identified by name. What does a name do? It distinguishes one person from another (or one God from another). It is used to identify. It is used to express authority.

I once asked a preacher - "Tell me, when you cast out devils, do you cast out devils in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?" He said, "Well no, I use the name of Jesus." Then I asked, "Well, when you heal the sick, do you heal the sick in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?" He said, "No, I use the name of Jesus." I then said -- "Why is it that you cast out devils in the name of Jesus, and you heal the sick in the name of Jesus, and you pray in the name of Jesus, and you even go to church in the name of Jesus, but refuse to baptize in the name of Jesus?"

The Bible declares first of all that "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) You can't get more explicit that the name and salvation go together. But when it comes to water baptism, the Bible plainly declares that the apostles only used the name of Jesus Christ for baptizing their converts.

Baptismal Formula in Scripture and in History

The historical sources below verify that the early Christian church did not use a triune formula for baptism, but rather used the "Name of Jesus Christ"

Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics (1951, volume II, page 384 and 389) – "The formula used was 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ' or some synonymous phrase; there is no evidence for the use of the triune name."

Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible (1962, Volume I, page 351) "The evidence...suggests that baptism in early Christianity was administered, not in the threefold name, but in the name of Jesus Christ or in the name of the Lord Jesus"

Otto Heick, *A History of Christian Thought (1965, Volume I, page 53)* "At first baptism was administered in the name of Jesus, but gradually in the name of the triune God: father, son, and holy spirit"

Hastings Dictionary of the Bible (1968, Volume I, page 241) "One explanation is that the original form of words was 'into the name of Jesus Christ', or 'the Lord Jesus'. Baptism into the name of the trinity was a later development.

The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (1957, Volume I, page 435) "The New Testament knows only baptism in the name of Jesus...which still occurs even in the second and third century."

Canney's *Encyclopedia of Religions (1970, page 53)* "Persons were baptized at first 'in the name of Jesus Christ' or 'in the name of the Lord Jesus'. Afterwards, with the development of the doctrine of the trinity, they were baptized in the name of the father, son, and of the holy spirit"

Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed. (1910), Volume II, page 365 "The Trinitarian formula and trine immersion were not uniformly used from the beginning...baptism into the name of the Lord was the normal formula of the New Testament.

In the 3rd century, baptism in the name of Christ was so widespread that Pope Stephen, in opposition to Cyprian of Carthage declared it to be valid."