

1 Corinthians 1:16 - And I baptized also the household of Stephanas [1 Corinthians 16:15]; beyond that I do not know whether I baptized any other.

- 1) What was happening in the Corinthian church is what continues to occur in the various denominational churches today. Baptism continues to divide, form factions, create schisms, cause disharmony, and foment discord within the body of Christ.
- 2) Paul was glad that he had very little to do with baptizing any of them. He was adamant that those he had baptized were not done in his name but that of Christ.
- 3) Paul's job was to teach doctrine to a church that was ignorant about its obligations before the Lord. They were stressing to the point of conflict on secondary issues at the expense of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Word of God.
- 4) Regardless of who baptized any of them they are all out of line, in status quo carnality, and in rapid descent through reversionism.
- 5) Why? Because they were emphasizing a ritual over the reality it portrays.
- 6) Paul makes this crystal in the next verse:

1 Corinthians 1:17 - For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should be neutralized.

- 1) The top priority in a local church is communication of the Word. When false issues encroach on this responsibility, then the cross of Christ is neutralized.
- 2) This is made evident today in so many churches. There are those who will turn away believers from the fellowship simply because they have not been baptized in the desired fashion.

- 3) There are denominations who, like the Pharisees of old, “shut off the kingdom of heaven from men” by attaching baptism to the gospel of salvation.
- 4) It is astounding to observe churches that make a big deal over loving Jesus yet shun believers who have not been baptized from their fellowship.
- 5) Even more ridiculous is for a church to forbid a child who is a member of the royal family of God from entering its Christian school for no other reason than he has not been baptized.
- 6) Baptism continues as a controversy today as it was in the first-century. There are entire denominations structured on the same arrogance that formed the four fifth columns in Corinth. In context, arrogance divides Christ in the sense that the temporal church is torn asunder.
- 7) Too little concern is given to the accuracy of the gospel, but meticulous emphasis is placed on whether one is baptized and, if so, how.
- 8) Majoring on this minor is one of the reasons that the unbelieving world has a legitimate reason to fear the influence of the Christian church on human government.
- 9) Paul was in town to preach, not baptize. If converts wanted to be baptized, then he let others perform the task.
- 10) What the members of the church at Corinth needed far more than the washing of literal water was a washing of their souls by the cleansing water of the Word of God. (1 John 1:9)
- 11) This was Paul’s mission and objective. Baptism and the person who performed it had accomplished nothing in Corinth but provoke schisms and Paul was determined to expose the irony.

- 12) Apparently all the members of the Corinthian church were baptized by somebody, but the body of Christ that met there was a house divided.

VI. Summary & Conclusions:

1. Water baptism is a ritual that has several applications in Scripture:
 - John's baptism prepared Jewish believers to enter into the millennial kingdom.
 - The baptism of Jesus announced His public ministry. His immersion illustrated His substitutionary death on the cross and His emersion illustrated His resurrection.
 - The appearance of the dove symbolized the enabling power of the Holy Spirit for the mission and confirmation by the voice of God verified that He was the Messiah.
 - The Great Commission was given to the apostles as a tool to teach the baptism of the Holy Spirit prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture.
 - The baptism of the Jews at Pentecost was the first transitional baptism and dealt with the guilt of the generation that was responsible for the crucifixion of Christ, and following their salvation resulted in their forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - The baptisms referenced by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 were all performed as a ritual to illustrate the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit although the assets that accompany this imputation were not being used.
2. Water baptism is still a legitimate practice today. However, ritual without reality is meaningless. If the candidate does not understand the doctrine it represents, then it is meaningless. If he does, then it can be a helpful teaching aid.
3. Water baptism is also a ritual that when performed before others is a witness testifying to the person's salvation while illustrating the reality of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

4. Water baptism is never a means of salvation, it is never a qualification for church membership, and it is even unnecessary unless the new believer desires to participate.
5. Baptism is not a sacerdotal function that is exclusive to church leaders such as pastors or his associates. Anyone can perform a baptism. All believers are royal priests and may conduct the ritual for any convert who wants to do so. For example, a father can baptize members of his family who are believers.
6. A pastor's job, as emphasized by Paul, is to teach his congregation. He should not be distracted from his primary duties of studying and teaching to perform a ritual that any member of his congregation is qualified to conduct.
7. Consequently, there is nothing wrong with water baptism. It is a legitimate practice and useful in teaching the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and as a testimony of one's salvation through faith alone in Christ alone.
8. Therefore, if you want to be baptized then do so. But its purpose is simply instructive. It is an illustration, a teaching aid, an elucidation.
9. The real issue for the believer is spiritual growth which requires Bible study, and Bible study that is consistently presented by a pastor-teacher who leads his congregation in such a way that "there be no divisions" (1 Corinthians 1:10) and that "there should be no schism in the body" (1 Corinthians 12:25).
10. Unfortunately, baptism continues to be a major cause of divisions and schisms among Christians and the bane of churches that emphasize this ritual at the expense of *exōteriké harmonía* of not only their local church but also the body of Christ.

Acts 2:38 - And Peter said to them, "All of you change your minds regarding Jesus as Messiah (and let each one of you be baptized by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ), because of the forgiveness of the sins of all of you; and all of you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit consisting of His indwelling and filling ministries." (EXT)

Acts 2:39 - "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (NASB)

1. Peter begins verse 39 by citing a promise with which his comments in verse 38 define as a “gift” of salvation. The word is the subject of the sentence, the singular noun **ἐπαγγελία** (**epangelia**): A legal term denoting a summons or promise to do or give something and in this case it refers to the promise of God of the indwelling and filling ministries of the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Christ.
2. The gospel is designed to inform the unbeliever of his problem before divine justice. All have sinned but Jesus came to offer Himself as our substitute before the Supreme Court of Heaven.
3. By virtue of His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, He put Himself in our place and allowed the justice of God to determine if He was qualified to be our substitute.
4. To qualify, Jesus must be free of personal sin and then freely offer Himself to receive the judgment that belongs to us. The result was the agony of the cross.
5. Since He was accepted by God as qualified, our judgment was transferred to Him and “by His wounds, we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). Those wounds were not of the physical kind but rather the collection of all human sin judicially imputed to Him for forensic judgment: “The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (Isaiah 53:6).
6. This promise is the gospel of salvation which may be received once the individual changes his mind about Christ. Simple faith in response to His work on the cross results in deliverance from the lake of fire and the imputation of eternal life (John 3:16).
7. Peter makes this offer clear and that its availability is universal to all including their children, plus all who are “far off,” referring to Gentiles generally but by application to “whosoever will.” All depends on a positive volitional response by each individual.
8. In light of this, we must give some attention to the final phrase, “as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” The word “call” is the aorist middle subjunctive of the verb **προσκαλέω** (**proskalēō**).

(End CR14-80. See CR14-81 for continuation of study at p. 801.)