

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

Volume 33

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

April 1999

No. 4

A PLEA FOR NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Part Two - Seven "Ones" of the Church

Number 6 - "One Baptism" (#3)

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

Last month we noted that there are six baptisms mentioned in the New Testament (NT): (1) the baptism John the Baptizer performed; (2) Holy Spirit baptism; (3) the baptism of fire; (4) the baptism of suffering and death; (5) baptism unto Moses; and (6) the baptism of the Great Commission. While we do not have the space to review all of these baptisms, it must be noticed that at the time the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus, about A.D. 60-62, he said there is "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

By the process of elimination we showed that the "one baptism" of which Paul spoke was the baptism which Christ told the apostles to perform when He gave them the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-47). That baptism, which was an immersion in water (Acts 8:35-40; Romans 6:3), was a command of the Lord (Matthew 28:19), and was to be performed in His name (Acts 2:38). Furthermore, only such persons who have sinned and can understand and believe the gospel of Christ [which excludes infants and small children] are proper subjects in need of baptism (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Mark 16:16). Those who believe must also repent and make public confession of that faith that Jesus is God's Son before being baptized (Acts 2:36-38; 8:35-38; Romans 10:9-10). The Scriptures also teach that the person being baptized must know he or she is believing, repenting of sins, confessing Christ as God's Son, **and** being baptized in Christ's name in order to obtain forgiveness of sins and be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21). These are all essential elements of the "one baptism," which the apostle Paul said is the **only valid baptism** in the present Christian age. If any one of these is missing, that person has not been properly baptized and must submit to being baptized

properly or remain in sin and be lost eternally.

OBJECTIONS TO THE "ONE BAPTISM"

While the Scriptures above are clear enough, there are those who try to cloud the thinking of some sincere people who truly desire to know the truth about the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5. We will note the objections of some who deny that baptism is absolutely necessary in order to be saved. The objections are printed in *italics* and the Scriptural responses are given in regular type.

Objection # 1: Baptism cannot be necessary to be saved because Mark 16:16 doesn't say, "he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned." Answer: Mark 16:16 **does** say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." In that first part of the verse Jesus clearly teaches that there are at least two things essential to being saved, one is "belief" (or faith) and two is being "baptized." True biblical faith will lead quite naturally to being baptized, but only one thing is necessary to be condemned, that is a lack of belief (cf. John 3:18). One who does not have faith would never consider being baptized. It would have made Jesus look silly if He had said, "He that believeth not and is not baptized shall be condemned." Consider this parallel illustration: "He who eats food and digests it shall live, but he who does not eat shall die." Two things are properly stated as being essential to living. There are other things also necessary but the illustration gives two things, as Jesus did in Mark 16:16. First, one must eat food, and second, one must digest that food in order to live. One may eat food, but if one does not also digest that food, he or she will die. Both eating and digesting are essential to living. However, one may die simply by refusing to eat food. You see how senseless it is to say, "He that does not eat food and does not digest it shall die." If one does

not eat, we do not have to be told that "if he does not digest his food he shall die." Likewise, if one does not believe, we do not have to be told that "if he will not be baptized he will be condemned." Since faith is required before baptism, for the one who does not believe, baptism is not even a consideration. As $1 + 1 = 2$, belief + baptism = salvation, but unbelief = condemnation. But it would also be true that belief minus baptism equals condemnation. How so? Because belief minus baptism actually equals unbelief, since one does not believe Jesus' statement that it requires both faith and baptism in order to be saved. Since Jesus put both belief and baptism **before** salvation, how can anyone have the authority to put salvation before baptism? The answer is, no one does have such authority, and those who do so are really unbelievers who reject Christ's teaching (John 12:48-50; Mark 8:38).

Objection # 2: Salvation by "faith" is mentioned in many passages where baptism isn't mentioned, like John 3:16; Acts 16:31 and Romans 5:1. Answer: First, **no passage in the Scripture says we are saved by faith alone.** In fact, James 2:24 says the exact opposite, stating, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." Second, "baptism" is said to save us in some passages where "faith" is not mentioned. Do the absences of the word "faith" in Acts 2:38; 22:16; and 1 Peter 3:20-21 teach that one can be saved without faith? Of course not. But neither do the absences of the word baptism in passages that speak of faith mean that baptism is not necessary in order to be saved. Faith is the beginning of man's part in the process of being saved, but most of the verses that say faith saves or justifies us speak of **continuing** faith. For example, John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The phrase "**believes** in Him" is in the present tense, literally meaning "whoever continues to believe in Him." Faith that is not obedient is not biblical faith and is not acceptable to God (cf.

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication # 211780

...is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER:** Please mail all changes of address to the above address.

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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Hebrews 5:8-9; 11:6; James 2:24). Since "belief" and "baptism" are joined by Christ as coming **before** salvation (Mark 16:16), those passages which mention "faith" as saving us include (by implication) repentance, confession, and baptism, which are also said to save us (Acts 11:18; Romans 10:10; 1 Peter 3:21.)

Objection # 3: Since Jesus saved the thief on the cross, who was not baptized, we can be saved in the same way. Answer: No one can prove that the thief had not been baptized with John's baptism while it was in force. However, that is not the main reason this objection fails. While on earth, Jesus had the power to forgive sins in whatever way He chose. In Mark 2:1-12 Jesus proved He had the right to forgive sins "on earth." In the same way, each one reading this article can choose to give away whatever possessions he or she wants to give away while alive on earth. However, when one dies one's last will and testament becomes effective. No one has the right, after you die and your will becomes effective, to come along and say, "I want some of John Doe's money. He gave other people some of his money while he was alive and I want to receive some in the same way." That person would be told that he or she would have to abide by the terms of your will. While Jesus was on earth He forgave sins as He desired to

do so, such as the paralytic man, the adulterous woman in John 8:1-11, or the thief on the cross in Luke 23:42-43. Since Jesus died and ascended to heaven, His last will and testament is the standard by which men will be forgiven. His New Covenant became effective at His death. Please read Hebrews 9:15-17 and see this point verified by Scripture. **Now**, after the cross and Christ's ascension, forgiveness is obtained according to Christ's testament, as revealed by the writers of the New Testament. Jesus gave the Great Commission to His apostles and said, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). On the Pentecost following Christ's resurrection the apostle Peter used the keys of the kingdom Christ promised him in Matthew 16:13-19. "Keys" symbolize the power to open, to admit entrance. In the book of Acts we see the apostles carrying out the Great Commission of Christ, opening the kingdom of God and admitting people into it. In Acts 2:36-38 the apostle Peter told the Jews to believe God had made Jesus "both Lord and Christ" (verse 36). When they expressed that faith by asking, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (verse 37), Peter told them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (verse 38). These are the "keys" which Peter and the other apostles used to admit one into God's kingdom. Faith, repentance, and baptism are part of God's plan for redeeming mankind, and, as such, are part of Christ's New Covenant will. Jesus is not on earth to dispense forgiveness as He once did, but He has promised to provide forgiveness to all who will believe and obey Him. He has made provision in His will for all men, but no one has the right to ignore Christ's will and say, "No, Lord. I want to be saved as You saved the thief on the cross." Those who disregard this revealed will of Christ may **call** Jesus, "Lord," but they do not truly **believe** He is Lord, or they would obey Him without questioning His commandment to be baptized in order to be saved (Luke 6:46; Mark 16:16). Because Christ's will is now in force, after His death, we can no more be saved like the thief on the cross was than we could be saved by offering the animal sacrifices of the Law of Moses.

Objection # 4: Literal water cannot touch the soul of man. Saying that water baptism is essential in order to be saved denies that God has the power to save man without physical elements or the aid of some

person to baptize people. Answer: While it is true that literal water cannot touch the soul, it is equally true that neither can literal blood touch the soul. If someone chooses to question the process whereby God says that Christ's blood atones for our sins, that person sets himself or herself above God. Some type of application of Christ's blood has to be made to our souls in order to receive forgiveness of sins and **God has the right to determine what that process will be.** Only the proper application as given by God will bring about the cleansing of our souls by the blood of Christ. Christ's blood is the cure, but how it is applied to each of us is to be determined by all that the Scriptures teach. If one has a headache, it will do no good just to carry a bottle of aspirin in one's pocket. Neither will it cure the headache if one tapes two aspirin to the top of one's head. Aspirin may be the right cure, but it must be administered properly.

For the benefits of Christ's blood to cure the sin-sick soul, it must be applied according to God's will. If the Roman soldiers at the foot of the cross had rubbed Christ's blood over their bodies, it would not have cleansed them of their sins. The blood of Christ was not automatically applied to the souls of all men, because fifty days after Christ's death, on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter told the Jews that they were guilty of the sin of crucifying Jesus (Acts 2:22-23). He then told the Jews who believed that Jesus was "Lord and Christ" to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). It is obvious that although Christ's blood had already been shed, these people were not yet forgiven. How could believers in Christ receive forgiveness of sins? In addition to having faith that Jesus had been made Lord and Christ, they were commanded to "repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." It is implied that the benefits of Christ's death and shed blood would then be accounted by God to the cleansing of each person's soul who obeyed these commands. Jesus Christ shed His precious sin cleansing blood in His death. Paul reminded the Christians at Rome, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"

(Romans 6:3-4). Jesus shed His blood in His death and we are "baptized into His death." Since we are "raised [from that baptism] to walk in newness of life," it must be obvious that our sins were "washed away" in that baptism into Christ's death (cf. Acts 22:16).

No one can properly deny that Christ's blood is **what** redeems us from our sins. The question is **when** God says this redemption occurs. Note the following: (1) Christ's blood is **what** was "shed...for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28), but Acts 2:38 shows that after believers "repent [and are] baptized" is **when** God grants us "remission of sins" through Christ's blood. (2) Hebrews 9:14 (ASV) says that the "blood of Christ" is **what** "cleanses [one's] conscience from dead works to serve the living God," but 1 Peter 3:21 says that after water baptism is **when** we can have a "good conscience toward God." (3) Revelation 1:6 says that Christ's "own blood" is **what** "washed us from our sins," but Acts 22:16 instructs us that the **when** of this event is after being baptized to "wash away thy sins."

CONCLUSION

There are several other objections to the teaching that water baptism is essential for salvation from sin. We will cover these next month, Lord willing. Meanwhile, it may be that you have believed some of the objections stated above. Please take your Bible and study carefully the answers given in Scripture to show that such objections are not truly valid. If we can assist you in further study we will be happy to do so, or contact the church of Christ nearest you.

A LOVE FOR THE ERRING

by Tracy Dugger

To the Christian, who cares for his fellow brother or sister in Christ, who has a passion for one's soul, it is sometimes difficult to tell one when he is wrong. However, it frequently falls upon the child of God to point out and correct the sin or error in someone else's life (2 Timothy 4:2; Galatians 6:1; Matthew 7:5; James 5:19-20). It is not an enjoyable task, but it is an essential one.

To show others their transgression is evidence of our **love** for their souls. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul in essence sends rebuke to two different parties. He obviously rebuked the incestuous fornicator, but

also upbraided the church for their toleration of him. Later in 2 Corinthians, Paul explains his motivation in chastising them, *"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you"* (2:4, NKJV). From this passage, it is evident that the apostle did not enjoy having to reprove and rebuke them. However, because of his abundant love for them, he was compelled to bring their sin to the forefront.

As a result of our love for those who become unfaithful, we ought to be driven to restore them to their first love. Again, it is never easy! It wasn't easy for Paul! In 2 Corinthians 7:8, Paul explained his disposition: *"For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while"* (NKJV). Paul is not speaking out of both sides of his mouth when he here says, *"I do not regret it; though I did regret it."* He is using the term "regret" in two different senses. Paul had many tearful regrets about sending a letter which exposed the immoral activity of a man and the lack of love of an entire church - it burdened his heart deeply. However, in another sense, he did not regret his action. His desire was to produce godly sorrow which would lead them to repent (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

It is never a joy to see someone in sin, but it is a great joy to see sinners repent. Let us endeavor to be the kind of mature Christian Paul was - **Hate the sin, love the sinner!** Expose the sin in genuine love for the soul of the sinner. The inspired words of James are fitting at this point: *"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins"* (James 5:19-20, NKJV).

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Don't think you can ignore the Lord in this life and He will give you a crown in the life to come.

When you find a man who shows evidence of walking with the Lord, you will do well to join him.

God is not looking for a few shares in our life, but controlling interest. Nothing else will please Him - or us.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

by Chuck Pearson

Most people do not *like* to be offensive! For the most part, we are reluctant to say and do things which might hurt people's feelings or alienate them. This is perfectly understandable. We don't like to be offended ourselves! Most of us would be happy if confrontation were unnecessary and completely avoidable!

Unfortunately, this is not the case. As Christians, we have an obligation to speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3), and proclaim "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) to a world which *needs* to hear and obey the gospel! Reproving the world of its darkness is not easy at times.

It's even harder when your own brother in Christ needs to be rebuked for his error. But reprove and rebuke we *must!* To do any less would be shirking our *God-authorized duty* as faithful followers of Christ (Eph. 5:11; 2 Tim. 4:2; Jude 23)!

We're often timid about offering rebuke and correction to the world and our own brethren on account of Matthew 7:12 (the Golden Rule). Jesus says: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Does this *really* say that we shouldn't rebuke someone because we wouldn't want them to rebuke us? I don't know about you, but if I was walking in darkness and living in error, I would *hope and expect* that someone would say something to me! Jesus *never* said that we can't judge anybody! He warned us, however, "for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Matt. 7:2). If we are living righteously, and observing God's commandments, we have every right and obligation to judge righteously, and by God's standards (i.e. the Bible). It is when we judge as *hypocrites* (see Matt. 7:3-5), and by our *own* standards that we sin (cf. John 7:24).

Brethren, why are we hesitant to confront and oppose error? Are we afraid of being persecuted for Christ's sake (Matt. 5:10-12)? Perhaps we are uncertain that what we have is *really* the truth and therefore authoritative (John 8:32).

The implications of this "wishy-washy" attitude to standing up for the truth is quite frightening when you think about it! If we are not actively engaging our worldly neighbors and brethren with the hard, sincere truth of the gospel, what

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READERS, PLEASE NOTE

Recently we have been receiving quite a number of calls and letters stating that various readers have received a bundle of papers with different names and addresses in addition to the reader's name. Somewhere along the line the Post Office has failed to open the bundle and distribute the papers to the individual names and addresses as they are supposed to do. **If that has happened to you in the past or happens in the future, will you please inform us?** We are trying to find out why this is happening so frequently in so many places. We need to know where this is happening so we can notify the Post Office responsible what they need to do to correct the problem. We are using a mailing program that is approved by the Postal Service and should not be experiencing this difficulty, but we are. Our local postmaster is working with us to correct the problem, but we need your help. Please let us know if this has ever happened to you and include your name and address so we can know the area involved.

Also, if we can impose upon you to do so, please take the following action. If you receive a bundle of papers which have additional names and addresses besides your own, please remove your paper from the bundle, and take the rest of the papers back to the Post Office window which serves your area. Explain to the postal worker what the problem is and ask him to see that the other papers are forwarded to the individual addresses. You do not have to put any additional postage on any of the papers! We have already paid to see that they get delivered and the Post Office is responsible to carry out their job. If the postal person gives you any difficulty, ask for a Consumer Service Card and explain the problem on the card and mail it. You will not have to put postage on this card either. The Consumer Service Department will require the postmaster of that Post Office to answer the complaint in writing and correct the problem.

We are doing our best to see that every reader receives his or her paper every month, but this is a problem which cannot be solved without your help. If you do not receive your paper please let us know and we will send you your missing issues. If you receive a bundle of names in addition to your own, please take them to the Post Office and ask them to forward them. Be sure to let us know also and we will try to prevent that from happening again. Thank you for your patience and your help.

- Ted J. Clarke, editor

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are we saying? First, we obviously do not fear God, for we are not persuading others to obey him (2 Cor. 5:11). Second, we obviously have lost our conviction that the world and our erring brethren are *fallen* and need to be pulled out of darkness, *with urgency* (Matt. 12:11-12)! Third, we have obviously grown *lazy* and become *dead in our faith*, and, as a result, will suffer the consequences: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16)!

Brethren, being firm in conviction and steadfast in proclaiming the truth is *not* vanity, nor done in deceit, pride, or personal glory! It is a fruit of sincere, living faith! "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I have believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4:13). We contend for Christ because we have *faith* in him, and *know* the blessings which come as a result! Why would we *not* strive to tell others the truth?

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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