

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

February 1999

No. 2

A PLEA FOR NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Part Two - Seven "Ones" of the Church

Number 6 - "One Baptism" (#1)

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

Our series continues with our consideration of the "one baptism" mentioned in Paul's series of exclusive items for which we ought to contend, as we "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3-6). Baptism is truly a Bible topic, with different forms of the word being used 100 times in the King James version of the New Testament. Nearly every religious group which calls itself "Christian" practices some type of water baptism, but there is wide disagreement as to what baptism is and what is its purpose.

Some religious groups "baptize" by immersion, others use sprinkling or pouring of water and call it baptism. Some believe that one must be baptized in order to receive forgiveness of sins for salvation, while others teach one should be baptized after one is saved. Still others claim that baptism is for the purpose of joining a church. Pentecostal groups emphasize Holy Spirit baptism as the most important type of baptism, while non-charismatic groups generally believe that water baptism is the primary reference in the New Testament. A vast number of denominations believe that babies are candidates for baptism, while a good number of religions administer their baptisms only to people considered to be of sufficient age to understand the meaning of baptism and who can make their own personal decisions to be baptized. We will try to address all these items from the viewpoint of the Scriptures, providing book, chapter, and verse for what we must believe.

From all the various ways of baptizing and the varied purposes described above, one can see the need to study this topic thoroughly to ascertain, according to the Scriptures, what is precisely the "one baptism" of which the apostle Paul speaks in Ephesians 4:5. As with all the other "ones" we have discussed, this is a matter

of speaking where the Bible speaks (cf. 1 Peter 4:11). We must call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways. Paul said, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Colossians 3:17). To the evangelist Timothy, Paul said, "**Hold fast the form [pattern] of sound words**, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus... And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, **the same commit thou to faithful men**, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2). We have no right to deviate from the things taught by inspired men like Paul. So we begin our investigation of what constitutes the "one baptism."

BAPTISM DEFINED

If one looks at a present-day dictionary under "baptism" you may find the following: "**baptism**...1. a baptizing or being baptized; specifically, the ceremony or sacrament of admitting a person into Christianity or a specific Christian church by dipping him in water or pouring or sprinkling water on him, as a symbol of washing away sin and of spiritual purification," or, "**baptize**...1. to dip (a person) into water, or pour or sprinkle water over him, as a symbol of admission into Christianity or a specific Christian church."¹ However, it is not the modern definition of a word we should be concerned with if we accept the authority of the Bible. The definitions above contain some truth, but they also contain much error when compared to the teaching on baptism which the Bible gives. Our modern dictionaries and word finders give the current and popular usage of words, but even if one knows where to look in the modern definitions, good English dictionaries will also give the word origins or what the word defined meant in its initial use. For example, under "baptism" this same source says, "**baptism**...<Gr.

baptisma, immersion," signifying that the original meaning of baptism is "immersion." Under "baptize" this dictionary says, "**baptize**...<Gr. *baptizein*, to immerse, baptize, substituted for the earlier *baptein*, to dip..." The "Gr." refers to the Greek language in which the New Testament was originally written and later translated into other languages such as our English. The original meaning of baptism or baptize in the Greek language was to dip (as in dyeing a garment) or to immerse in something. That was the meaning of those words when used in the writings of the New Testament of our Bibles and the meaning we should go by today if we want to obey God's will.

There are also special dictionaries, called lexicons, which also show the way words were used when the New Testament was written nearly two thousand years ago. One Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament says of the Greek word translated "baptize" (*baptizo*), "1. prop. to dip repeatedly, to immerse, submerge...2. to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water...3. metaphorically to overwhelm...In the N.T. it is used particularly of the rite of sacred ablution [cleansing], first instituted by John the Baptist, afterwards by Christ's command...an immersion in water."² Of the Greek word translated "baptism" (*baptismos*) the same source says, "3. of Christian baptism; this, according to the view of the apostles, is a rite of sacred immersion, commanded by Christ, by which men confessing their sins and professing their faith in Christ are born again by the Holy Spirit unto a new life, come into the fellowship of Christ and the church (1 Cor. xii. 13), and are made partakers of eternal salvation" (page 95).

One can properly ask, "If the original meanings of baptize and baptism were to immerse in water (liquid) or figuratively, to overwhelm, why does the dictionary today add sprinkling or pouring water over someone and call those things baptism?" The answer is that these substitutes for immersion became popular over the years since the New Testament was written and present-day dictionaries give present-

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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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Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

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day popular usage of the words. However, our concern must be for what God meant when Christ commanded baptism and He inspired the apostles to do the same. If Jesus and the New Testament meant "immersion" two thousand years ago, and we have shown that is the case, then, since we are to preach the same things today until Christ returns, we must observe baptism by immersion. That is the meaning of the word and there is no other way to immerse than to immerse. Sprinkling and pouring are different actions and cannot be properly substituted for immersion, just like one cannot "walk" by "flying" nor "inhale" by "exhaling."

BAPTISM AND BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

You will notice that none of the popular English translations of the Bible today use the words "immerse or immersion" in those passages from the Greek New Testament which speak of *baptizo* or *baptisma*. Instead, the translators of English Bibles, from at least the King James version of A.D. 1611 onward, have Anglicized the Greek words to make them have English forms. The Greek *baptisma* became the English word "baptism," and the Greek *baptizo* became the English "baptize." The problem is that doing such is not the true process of translation of one language to another,

where one takes the word from the source language (like Greek) and gives it an equal or equivalent meaning in the target language (like English). For example, in Matthew 28:19 the King James text has Christ giving His apostles the Great Commission, saying, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." If this verse had been properly translated from the Greek into the English language it would have said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, **immersing** them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In Acts 2:38, where Peter preached the first gospel sermon of salvation in the name of Christ, a proper translation would have had Peter say, "Repent, and **be immersed** 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," in place of the King James' "Repent, and be baptized every one of you..." This is not just a problem with the King James version, but all the popular Bibles in the English language.

Around 1850 some Baptist groups organized the American Bible Union, with the translation of the complete New Testament published in a single edition in 1865. "It used the word 'immerse' throughout where the Authorized Version had 'baptize.'"³ (The "Authorized version" is another designation for the King James version, which was authorized by England's king of the same name.) The American Bible Union project ran low on funds, but in 1912 the complete Bible appeared under the title, **The Holy Bible—An Improved Edition**. The "final edition employs the double rendering, 'baptize (immerse)' wherever this rite is mentioned."⁴ The version did not gain wide acceptance and Baptist groups ended up not liking the version anyway, since, in effect, it removed the name "Baptist" from the Scriptures, thus eliminating the idea of the Baptist Church. "John the Baptist" in the new translation became "John the Immerser," which is really quite accurate but was not well accepted. John, whether you call him "the Baptist" or "the Immerser," never intended for Christ's church to be named after him. The church is the bride of Christ the Groom, not John the Baptist, who was the best man or friend of the groom. Brides wear the names of their grooms, not the names of the best men (cf. John 3:29-30).

Why did the translators of all popular versions use "baptize" in place of the more

literal "immerse"? At the time of the translating of the King James version, the emerging Protestant religious groups had adopted the practice of infant baptism (sprinkling and pouring and calling it baptism), which had gained ascendancy under Roman Catholic rule. Even though England broke away from Catholic rule and formed the Church of England, they held on to many of the Catholic practices. While immersion was not denied to be the original intent of Scripture, it was felt that sprinkling or pouring water was acceptable and much more convenient. Thus, "baptism" has come to have those additional meanings for many, which allows for immersion of a candidate in water, but includes as well sprinkling or pouring water on the person desiring to be baptized.

It is true that a translation of the Bible today, which had "immerse" or "immersion" (in place of "baptize" and "baptism"), would be an improved and more accurate translation. However, you are not likely to see such an effort because of the desire of many to mistakenly keep promoting sprinkling and pouring as ways to baptize. Making Bibles has always been a very expensive proposition. Translations of the Bible today are made with large target groups in mind, knowing that any translation made must sell in vast quantities in order to make money. "Baptism" has been a disputed area in Bible translations in England and America for hundreds of years. Likely, no one is going to the expense to print a Bible translation which excludes the millions of people who believe in sprinkling or pouring as a type of baptism, even though those actions do not meet the original meaning of baptism in the New Testament. Even though the original Greek words for immersion are not properly translated into our English Bibles, one can still demonstrate that the New Testament demands the meaning of immersion to fulfill this act commanded by the Lord and His apostles.

*(to be continued)***ENDNOTES**

¹ **Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language**, ed., David B. Guralink. New York: Williams Collins Publishers, 2nd College Edition, 1980.

² **The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon**, Joseph Henry Thayer. Lafayette, IN: AP & A, 1979, p. 94-95.

³ **The Ancestry of Our English Bible**, Ira M. Price. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 3rd revised ed. by William Irwin & Allen Wikgren, 1956, pp. 293-294.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

WHY SHOULD WE BE INVOLVED IN THE LORD'S WORK?

by Jerry W. Joseph

Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Every child of God has the obligation and privilege to be actively involved in the Lord's work. Let us notice some reasons why we should be involved in the work of the Lord.

(1) TO BE PLEASING TO GOD. God commands us, as a part of His will, to be active, to abound in His work (1 Corinthians 15:58). Every child of God should have the desire to please God. It is only by doing the will of God that we can please Him (Matthew 7:21).

(2) BECAUSE IT IS GOOD. No spiritually minded Christian will deny this. If it is good to be involved in the Lord's work, and it is, then we must be involved. To fail to do so is wrong (James 4:17). It is always good to do what the Lord says!

(3) BECAUSE OF OUR LOVE. One way in which we can demonstrate our love for God is by being involved in His work (1 John 5:2-3). A genuine love always demonstrates itself!

(4) BECAUSE IT IS GOD-LIKE. God got involved in our lives! (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). If God had chosen not to be involved in our lives, just where would we be today!

(5) BECAUSE IT IS CHRIST-LIKE. Christ was willing to get involved in our lives to the point of giving himself (Philippians 2:5-8). He served, sacrificed for our benefit. Let us show our appreciation by getting involved in the Lord's work.

(6) BECAUSE OF OUR INFLUENCE. If we are to have a good influence upon others we must be involved in good works (Matthew 5:16). We are commanded to "provoke one another unto love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24).

(7) TO HELP THE CONGREGATION. For a congregation to grow and become stronger in the Lord it takes involvement by the members. Every child of God has to get involved!

(8) TO HELP OTHERS. People in sin need to hear the gospel of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 1:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). There are those who have

become unfaithful that need to be restored (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20). Others need to be helped physically (Galatians 6:10). If we don't get involved there are people who are not going to be helped spiritually or physically.

(9) TO HELP OURSELVES. We will not grow as we should without active service (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 1:5-12; 2 Peter 3:18).

(10) BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LORD'S WORK. Is there a greater work? There is no greater work than the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

(11) BECAUSE WE MUST WISELY USE OUR TIME. Is there a better way to use our time? If so, what is it? (Ephesians 5:16).

(12) BECAUSE WE MUST WISELY USE OUR TALENTS. God has blessed each one of us with abilities, talents. Instead of just using them for our own personal use, God wants us to use them in service to Him (Matthew 25:14-30).

(13) BECAUSE THERE IS JOY IN SERVING GOD. When we become involved in the Lord's work there is going to be joy in our lives. We will rejoice because we are able to serve Him. We will rejoice in knowing that our work for Him is not going to be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

(14) BECAUSE THE DEVIL IS INVOLVED IN HIS WORK. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8). As long as the Devil stays busy in his work, we must be active in the Lord's work.

(15) TO GUARD AGAINST APOSTASY. We can become unfaithful to God (1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 5:4; James 5:19-20). But by becoming involved in the Lord's work, we are helping to prevent this from happening to us (2 Peter 1:5-12).

(16) BECAUSE WE ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OUR OPPORTUNITIES. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). God has given us opportunities to do good. By getting involved in the Lord's work we are taking advantage of those opportunities.

(17) BECAUSE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT GETTING INVOLVED. The lost will not be saved. The erring will not be restored. Those with physical needs will not be helped. The congregation will not progress. We as individual Christians will not become spiritually mature.

(18) BECAUSE THE JUDGMENT DAY IS COMING. Paul said, "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:9-10). On the judgment day we will give account of the things we have done. How tragic it will be to stand before God on that day knowing that we had not been involved in His work (Romans 14:12).

(19) BECAUSE WE WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN AND NOT TO HELL. At the judgment we will either go into "everlasting punishment" or "life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). Heaven or hell will be our eternal home. For those who have obeyed the gospel and have faithfully served, how good it will be to hear the Lord say at the judgment: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23).

(20) BECAUSE WE HAVE NO REASON NOT TO! We may have hundreds of excuses for not being involved in the Lord's work, but we do not have one reason. God will not accept our excuses!

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JESUS: THE MASTER

by James Burns

Jesus was the master of every situation which confronted him. He was the master at being in control.

When he came to be baptized by John the Baptist, he was not "responding" to John's preaching. Jesus came to the Jordan River with the intent of being baptized. John was even reluctant to baptize him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by you." Although John was doing the baptizing, Jesus was in charge of his own baptism. (Matthew 3:13-17)

Jesus often encountered antagonistic questioners whose goal was to entrap him. Repeatedly he turned their schemes against them. Read Matthew 22:15-46 to see the masterful way he dealt with difficult questions. Another example is his treatment of the woman taken in adultery and her accusers. He knew exactly how to handle the situation. (John 8:1-11).

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A time we might least expect him to be in control was in his arrest, trial and crucifixion. Yet when the multitudes came to arrest him, he assured them that their weapons were not necessary, nor would they have been effective had he chosen to ask his Father to send twelve legions of angels to his rescue (Matthew 26:51-56). He allowed himself to be taken. Although Pilate thought he was in charge of Jesus' trial, Jesus reminded him that he had no real power (John 19:10-11). His crucifixion might seem to have been his most helpless hour. However, the words he uttered from the cross are not the words of a desperate man. Note his final words: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). These are words of willful surrender. Earlier, of his own life he had said, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18).

Even death itself did not render him out of control. He had the power to rise from the dead. He had said, "I lay down my life that I might take it again" (John 10:17).

Truly, Jesus was the master – the master of every situation which confronted him.

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PASTOR

by Ted Horn

The term "pastor" in referring to a preacher is **not** what the New Testament teaches. The word "pastor" is used in the New Testament in reference to **elders**, not preachers. The word "pastor" is the Greek word "poimen" and means "a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks." In Acts 20:17, Paul "called the elders of the church." To those **elders**, Paul said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The **elders** are the overseers; **they are to feed** the church. The **elders** are the pastors of the church. The words "to feed" in Acts 20:28 go back to the Greek word "poimen." Elders are **under** Christ (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 3:17).

There cannot be just one elder in each church; there must be **more** than one. Acts 14:23, "...elders in every church..." (Titus 1:5). Therefore, the term "the pastor" is a false term in referring to a person. A preacher could be an elder if

he met the qualifications (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1; 1 Peter 5), but then there must be **more** than one elder.

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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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