

## NEW TESTAMENT VERSUS DENOMINATIONAL BAPTISM

L. R. Hester

Following the Lord's resurrection and preceding his ascension, he commissioned the apostles, saying: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:18-20)

Here Jesus authorized a baptism that is to be (1) preceded by teaching, (2) administered by men, and (3) practiced unto the end of the world. Thus are these three facts certain: (1) this baptism is valid today; (2) infants, having never been taught, are not subjects of it; and (3) men being the administrators, it is not Holy Spirit baptism. Holy Spirit baptism was **promised** and not **commanded** (Matt. 3:11, 12; Acts 1:5), and was administered by the **Lord** upon two occasions. The apostles received Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:1-4), and the house of Cornelius received it. (Acts 10:44-45; 11:15-17) It was administered upon the apostles that they might be equipped to carry out the great commission, and upon the house of Cornelius to convince Peter and his Jewish brethren that the gospel is for the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Today, there is **one** baptism. (Eph. 4:5) The element of this baptism is water (Acts 10:47, 48); the act is a burial (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), and the design is remission of sins. (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38) This baptism is the consummating act of primary gospel obedience by which a penitent, confessing believer in Jesus Christ is liberated from the domain of Satan — a domain of sin, darkness, bondage and perdition. But into what is New Testament baptism?

It is into **Jesus Christ**: "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." (Rom. 6:3, 4) When the candidate for salvation escapes the domain of Satan he enters into Christ, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Eph. 1:7) And it is in the action of baptism that this translation is effected.

**I** New Testament baptism is into the death of Christ: "...so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death." Those who deny that baptism is a condition of salvation remind us that it is in the **blood** of Christ that we are cleansed from sin. (1 Jno. 1:7; Rev. 1:5) Exactly, but it is in the grave of baptism that the blood is **contacted**, and the cleansing **effected**. Jesus shed his blood in his death. (Jno. 19:34), and we are **baptized into his death, and thus into his blood.**

**II** New Testament baptism is into the candidate's own death to sin. "...we are buried 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.**" The phrase "into death" (Rom. 6:4) refers to the candidate's death to **sin**. As Jesus was

quickened in the grave, so is man quickened in the grave of baptism. He is buried dead in sin and raised dead to sin. He is buried dead to righteousness and raised alive to righteousness. Both before and after baptism, he is both dead and alive — before baptism he is alive to the guilt of sin and dead to righteousness; after baptism he is dead to the guilt of sin and alive to righteousness. When he dies to sin, to the guilt of sin, when God ceases to impute, or attribute, his sins unto him (Rom. 4:7, 8), he is quickened unto **righteousness**. God at this point forgives him, and imputes his (the candidate's) faith for righteousness. (Rom. 4:5; 6:17, 18) When he has died to sin he is freed from sin. (Rom. 6:7) This change is effected in baptism, where he is quickened together with Christ. Paul said, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col. 2:12, 13)

**III** New Testament baptism is into Christ's kingdom. When the penitent, confessing believer, in the grave of baptism, receives the forgiveness of sins, by means of Christ's blood, he is "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." (Col. 1:13) He is then to "walk in newness of life." He has acquired citizenship in the spiritual kingdom of heaven, and is a voluntary subject of the divine government. He is in covenant relationship with God in Christ; the realm of righteousness is his domain and Christ is his King. Thus he is to speak and act "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17), accepting the New Testament as his **sole, all-sufficient and final rule of faith and practice.**

**IV** New Testament baptism is into one body: "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...." (1 Cor. 12:13) "Now are there many members, yet **but one body.**" (1 Cor. 12:20) This one body is Christ's one church: "He is the head of the body, the church." (Col. 1:18) Therefore, New Testament baptism is into **one church and into but one church.**

**V** New Testament baptism is into a spiritual relationship. It is into the universal body of Christ, and makes one a "fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." (Eph. 2:19) To those who had received this baptism Peter said: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, and holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5) This spiritual house is a holy temple in the Lord "builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2:21, 22)

**VI** New Testament baptism is into a divine fellowship. Of those who were baptized on Pentecost, the scriptures say, "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and

(Continued on page twelve)

## REFLECTIONS ON THE DEATH OF THE PRESIDENT — — —

(Continued from page one)

men that he might stand before the "Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work." (1 Peter 1:17) If he trusted in these worldly things for security, he was bereft of them in his hour of greatest need. If all of these things possessed by him in the **maximum** degree could not bring him security, how may I hope for security in the small portion of any of them that I might attain?

### The One Essential Of Life

From all over the world they came, Prime Ministers, Presidents, Chancellors, Kings. Those great of earth who could not come sent glowing tributes, extolling the deceased. By his bier they passed, throughout the night, the little people and the great ones who wished to honor him; and when they closed the doors long lines still waited. The funeral, planned to be the most elegant of history, probably achieved its aim. It will never be forgotten, even by the countless millions on either side of the Atlantic who could not attend but who watched by television. A tribute was paid, the cost of which will probably never be calculated. Predictions are heard even yet that history will record him as one of this nation's truly great residents.

All of these things are extremely important to the family, to the friends, even to the nation. And they were of importance to him — **until that fateful moment. Now they have no value.** Nothing matters now save one consideration: Did he "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." That one thing alone is essential.

My life is filled with important things — important they are to me, at least, and to my family to some degree. Making a living, having a good home with decent and comfortable furniture, food, clothing, an automobile to drive, facilities for relaxation and recreation, the education of my children, social acceptance, civic duties. These are important and may it be said at my death that I achieved them. But they are not essential — except as faithfulness in some of them may relate to that one true essential — the fear of God and obedience to his commandments. The moment of death will bring to each of us a sudden wisdom — an instant recognition of true value. May God grant us the wisdom to recognize these values before the hour of death for it will then be too late to re-orient our lives!

— 1801 North 27th Street, Birmingham, Alabama

## ALCOHOLISM ON THE INCREASE — — —

(Continued from page three)

wine for his stomach's sake (1 Timothy 5:23) are two of

their favorite "proof" passages. But these passages do not prove their contention.

Those who so argue assume that the wine which Jesus made was an intoxicant. This no man can prove; but if he could, he would have proved more than he would like to admit. I suggest that if John 2:1-11 proves that our Lord approved of drinking intoxicating wine at all, it **proves that he approved of drunkenness!** Yet, all — even those members who argue for social drinking — agree that the Bible condemns drunkenness. John 2:10 reads, "...Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." Thus, at the very time the Lord made the wine, those who consumed it were "well drunk." If the wine was an intoxicant, the Lord contributed, not just to social drinking, but to outright drunkenness. Now, who is the first to step up and proclaim that Jesus supplied the intoxicant with which to make men who were "well drunk" even drunker? Friend, until you are willing to so affirm, John 2:1-11 is not your proof passage for social drinking.

Likewise, those who use these passages to console their worldly desire to "have a drink" assume that the wine of 1 Timothy 5:3 was an intoxicant. Again, no man could prove this. And again, if he could he would not have proved his contention about social drinking. This wine was to be taken medicinally — "for thy stomach's sake and thine oft infirmities." The social drinker is not the kind of Christian that Timothy was, for it took the instructions of an inspired apostle to get him to even take the stuff as a medicine!

In conclusion, I think a couple of verses from the book of Proverbs are very apropos:

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. (Prov. 20:1)  
Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cease? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. (Proverbs 23:29-32)

— 1502 S. 3rd, Tucumcari, New Mexico

## NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM VERSUS DENOMINATIONAL BAPTISM — —

(Continued from page eight)

fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The word "fellowship" in this passage (Acts 2:42) involves something other than monetary contributions or a mutual sharing together in the activities of the church. This is the **apostles' fellowship** just as the doctrine of the passage is the apostle's doctrine. It is the fellowship enjoyed by the apostles. And of this fellowship, the apostle John said: "...truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 Jno. 1:3) This is a divine fellowship

— a fellowship with divine persons. John further said: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:5-7) This fellowship "one with another" is the fellowship of a Christian with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and this is the "apostles'" fellowship mentioned in Acts 2:42. If two men have fellowship with God, they surely have fellowship with each other, but all who are baptized into Christ are baptized into fellowship with divine persons, and with other members of the divine and spiritual body. We speak of withdrawing fellowship, and we are authorized to withdraw ourselves from every brother who walks disorderly (2 Thess. 3:6) but only the person who has been baptized into fellowship with God can withdraw or sever that divine fellowship. Before we can in righteousness withdraw from a brother, he must first sever his fellowship with God, by his own failure to "continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42) or to "walk in the light." (1 John 1:7)

And now, let us examine denominational baptism in the light of the foregoing. Some denominational churches deny that baptism is essential to salvation, and contend that men are admitted into Christ, the death of Christ, their own death to sin, newness of life, the one divine body, the spiritual relationship, and divine fellowship of that body, before and without baptism. Yet, to become a member of the respective denomination, one must accept what that denomination calls baptism; and in so doing he accepts a baptism that is into the denominational church, which is admittedly not the one divine body of 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18. But New Testament baptism is (1) "one baptism," (2) "by one Spirit," and (3) "into one body." (Eph. 4:5; 1 Cor. 12:13) The one and only baptism that the Holy Spirit is the author of is into one divine body and into the divine fellowship of that body. The denominational church is an additional body with its additional fellowship, and neither the body or the fellowship is divine in nature. Surely, the Holy Spirit is not the author of the baptism that is into that human body and fellowship.

Then there are other denominational churches that preach baptism "for the remission of sins" and tell sinners that it is into the one divine body with its divine fellowship. Among these denominations are the Mormon, Christadelphian and Christian Churches. Is the baptism administered by these churches New Testament baptism? Is it the "one baptism" that is "by one Spirit" and "into one body"? Should the churches of Christ accept as members individuals from these denominations, upon the baptism they have received? Some say we should, and especially that we should receive members from the Christian Church, without immersing them for the remission of sins.

I do not believe that such a practice is in harmony with the truth. The Christian Church constitutes "one body" that is not the one divine body. It is a human body in addition to the divine body, with its human relationship and fellowship. And the baptism administered by it is into an authorized body, relationship and fellowship. If someone insists that the baptism administered by the Christian Church does not make one a member of that human body

and forbidden fellowship, let him prove that those who receive it do not thereby become recognized members of the Christian Church; and if someone insists that this baptism is into both the divine and human bodies, and the divine and human fellowship, let him explain how the one baptism, by one Spirit, into one body, can be into two bodies one divine and the other human.

The Bible says: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph. 5:11) And if there is an objection to my reference to a denomination as an "unfruitful work of darkness," the objector is sincerely invited to cite a single passage of scripture giving to any denomination a place in the divine light.

New Testament baptism is immersion in water of a penitent, confessing believer, in Jesus Christ, in order to receive the remission of sins, and it is into the one blood-bought church of Jesus Christ. If you, dear reader, have not accepted it, you are urged to do so while time is yours.

If the reader has Bible proof that any part of this article does not represent truth, he or she is invited to call the same to my attention. God's truth is our only hope. (Jno. 8:32)

— Route No. 1, Savoy, Texas

---

## THE BIBLE AND HUMAN CREEDS — —

---

(Continued from page nine)

accepted it. This principle applies to the doctrine of any human denomination. The doctrine of any human denomination is not the same in all respects as the Bible doctrine. We must believe the Bible; we need not believe the doctrine of any human denomination.

Do you say your doctrine is different? Then you must take the position that all of us must believe every detail of your doctrine in order to be saved? Either this is true, or your doctrine is not the same as Biblical doctrine, for we must believe all of Bible doctrine in order to be saved. There is not one single "Thus saith the Lord" concerning which we are free to say, "I do not believe that." "...he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16)

The point I am making is this: Every single one of us should abandon every human creed and opinion and follow the Bible and the Bible only. This course will make us members of the blood bought, heaven sent, and Spirit filled church of Jesus Christ. It will not make us members of any human denomination.

—1254 Enota Drive, N. E., Gainesville, Georgia

---

WOULD YOU PLEASE NOTIFY US OF ANY CHANGE IN ADDRESS IN ADVANCE IF POSSIBLE. THANKS!

---