

WATER BAPTISM

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Many believe that it is necessary for a believer in Christ to be baptized in water. In this study we will try to take a look at what the Bible teaches about water baptism and see if it is true that God wants us to practice it today.

A. Water in the Old Testament

1. The Laver – “And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, ‘thou shalt also make a laver of brass and his foot also of brass, to wash withal and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar and thou shalt put water therein, for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation they shall wash with water that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord: so they shall wash their hands and their feet that they die not and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations’” (Exodus 30:17-21). Here God institutes the laver for Aaron and his sons.

2. The Laver is made – “And he made the laver of brass and the foot of it of brass, of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation” (Exodus 38:8). The polished brass mirrors of the women were used to make the laver.

3. King Solomon made new Lavens to go into his temple – “Then made he ten lavers of brass; one laver contained forty baths; and every laver was four cubits; and upon every one of the ten bases one laver. And he put five bases on the right side of the house and five on the left side of the house and he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward over against the south. And Hiram made the lavers and the shovels and the basins” (1 Kings 7:38-40). Here we have a new temple but no new instructions concerning the Laver. The High Priest and his sons were still to use the laver before they sacrificed.

B. Israel’s failure to keep the Old Covenant and God’s offer to them

1. “And He said, ‘go and tell this people, hear ye indeed but understand not; and see ye indeed but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert and be healed.’ Then said I, ‘Lord, how long?’ And He answered, ‘until the cities be wasted without inhabitant and the houses without man and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land’” (Isaiah 6:9-12).

2. “But I had pity for Mine holy name which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, ‘thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel but for Mine holy name’s sake which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. And I will sanctify My great name which was profaned among the heathen which ye have profaned in the

midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen and gather you out of all countries and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and ye shall keep My judgments and do them, and ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers and ye shall be My people and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:21-28). The promise to Israel of the coming of a New Covenant.

C. John the Baptist’s coming gives hope to the nation of Israel

1. In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying ‘repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ for this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah saying, ‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.’ And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair and a leathern girdle about his loins and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan and were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:1-6). “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Matthew 3:11-12). Water and Spirit as promised in the New Covenant.

2. “John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem and were baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a girdle of a skin about his loins and he did eat locusts and wild honey and preached saying, ‘there cometh One mightier than I after me the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Mark 1:4-8). Water and Spirit as promised in the New Covenant.

3. “Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet saying, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:2-6). “John answered saying unto them all, ‘I indeed baptize you with water but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Luke 3:16). Water and Spirit as promised in the New Covenant.

4. “John bare witness of Him and cried saying, ‘this was He of Whom I spake, He That cometh after me is preferred before me; for He was before me.’ John answered them saying, ‘I baptize with water; but there standeth One among you Whom ye know not; He it is Who coming after me is preferred before me, Whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.’ And I knew Him not; but He That sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, ‘upon whom thou shall see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He Which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost’” (John 1:15,26-27,33). Water and Spirit as promised in the New Covenant.

D. Christ’s Baptism

1. Many feel that because Christ was baptized in water, we should also follow Him by doing the same. “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. But John forbad Him saying, ‘I have need to be baptized of Thee and comest Thou to me?’ And Jesus answering said unto him, ‘suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he suffered Him” (Matthew 3:13-15).

2. Christ was baptized to “fulfill all righteousness”. When Christ was baptized the Mosaic Law was in effect. Christ says in Matthew 5:17, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

3. Christ became a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. “And it is yet far more evident; for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another Priest, Who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For He testifieth, ‘Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec’” (Hebrews 7:15-17). “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant. And they truly were many priests because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:22-25).

4. Under the Mosaic Law a priest had to wash before every sacrifice. Christ’s perfect sacrifice took away the need for any more sacrifices, thus Christ was baptized once. We cannot fulfill any righteousness for God and therefore our baptism in water does nothing for us, in fact, we cannot be baptized to fulfill all righteousness.

E. What is the purpose of Water Baptism in the Book of Acts?

1. The answer lies in what Christ told Nicodemus in John 3:1-5: “There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night and said unto Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him.’ 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.’”

2. The coming of the Holy Spirit – “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

3. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, ‘men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said unto them, ‘repent and be baptized 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. For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.’ And with many other words did he testify and exhort saying, ‘save yourselves from this untoward generation.’ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:36-41). Water and Spirit signs of the New Covenant.

4. “Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost: for as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:14-17). Water and Spirit, signs of the New Covenant.

5. “And Ananias went his way and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, ‘brother Saul, the Lord even Jesus That appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized” (Acts 9:17-18). The apostle Paul was saved under the offer of the New Covenant to Israel; therefore the water and the Holy Spirit were necessary for him.

6. “And they of the circumcision, which believed, were astonished as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter, ‘can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days” (Acts 10:45-48). Gentiles are being let in to the offer of the New Covenant to “provoke Israel to Jealousy”.

7. “And it came to pass that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, ‘have ye received the holy Ghost since ye believed?’ And they said unto him, ‘we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.’ And he said unto them, ‘unto what then were ye baptized?’ And they said, ‘unto John’s baptism.’ Then said Paul, ‘John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on Him Which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:1-8). Water and Spirit the signs of the New Covenant.

8. During the Act’s period Paul is laboring under the New Covenant and therefore is baptizing in water. “Who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6). “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas” (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). The Corinthians were fighting over who they should follow and some were following Paul instead of Christ. “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:13). Water baptism was being practiced during the Act’s period because the New Covenant is being offered to Israel and Gentiles are being let in to provoke Israel to jealousy.

F. Is water necessary during the Dispensation of the Mystery?

1. “There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all and through all and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

2. What is the one baptism for today? “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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:4-6). “And ye are complete in Him, Which is the head of all principality and power: in Whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; 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” (Colossians 2:10-12).

G. Conclusion:

Today we are not under the Covenants of God to Israel: “Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:11-12). The One Baptism for today is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ as Paul says in Colossians 2:10-12). This baptism is the one all believers must experience and are given when a person accepts Christ’s death, burial and resurrection as being for them.

“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him: in Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ. In Whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:10-14). If water baptism were necessary today, Paul would have said that there are two baptisms.
