

# The Evolution of Baptism

## Baptism – The History

The religious act of baptism is one of the most misunderstood, ill-used, and treacherous doctrines in the entire Bible. I recognize that's an extremely strong and quite possibly offensive way to open a study on the doctrine of Biblical baptism but I hope to prove, in the next few pages, that it's neither hot hyperbole nor heresy. I honestly can't think of a more egregious religious doctrine that has been used for malicious purposes than the doctrine of baptism, except for possibly the doctrine of the Eucharist and the medieval Catholics.

A brief study of history reveals that, during the time of the reformation and following, religious groups that practiced paedobaptism banished, persecuted, and even murdered Christians who refused to have their infants sprinkled. State churches, especially those in Europe and early America, used the rite of baptism to strong arm congregants into total submission by threatening to withhold the sacrament of baptism from their children or grandchildren if they didn't completely comply with church rules and regulations, and that included the requirement for hefty monetary contributions. Those enormous edifices ubiquitous throughout Europe weren't built free of charge. Both state and church have used these threats throughout history as a means to exercise control over the general population. I highly recommend the book titled, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren* (Leonard Verduin, 1964) to anyone who wishes to learn more about the acts of violence perpetrated through the doctrine of baptism.

Let's briefly describe the current landscape of the doctrine of baptism. Here's a smattering of doctrinal variations you'll find if you investigate the numerous religions regarding the subject.

The Lutherans teach that a person is "born again in baptism" when the pastor sprinkles a little "holy" water on an infant and says some magical words; Calvin taught that baptism (infant or adult) replaced the covenant of circumcision that God made exclusively with the MALE children of Israel (not sure how that makes sense since OT females were not circumcised but NT females are baptized), the Cambellites believe a person needs to "believe AND be baptized (in WATER) for the remission of sins", the Baptist believe that a person's WATER baptism is an outward showing of an inward belief (sorry, I can't locate that in scripture), and the Mormons believe that a person can be WATER baptized for the dead (really, the DEAD!). Even the Jehovah Witnesses, who reject Jesus Christ's deity, demand baptism as a prerequisite for group membership. The truly crazy fact is that each religious faction has their proof texts for their unique baptismal beliefs and they stray far from the simple truth when these groups fail to "rightly divide the word of truth".

In spite of their wide ranging doctrinal differences, one element of baptism is consistent among all the groups and it's the same treachery that is ubiquitous throughout humanity. The common element is the act of controlling the behavior of constituents, congregants, and anyone loosely belonging to a particular religious group. This control element manifests itself in different ways and to varying degrees based on the group with whom one associates.

The Catholics taught that, due to original sin, unbaptized children were sent to a place called "limbo" which was neither heaven nor hell. The priest could offer little hope for babies that failed to receive the "right of baptism" prior to passing.

# The Evolution of Baptism

However, Pope Benedict expressed doubts about limbo and therefore authorized the publication of the document called, "The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized". This new Papal bull (I love that term) effectively eliminated the doctrine of limbo for unbaptized children but begs the question, "What happened to the children that died BEFORE this new revelation"? What about all those poor people who were told that their unbaptized children were stuck in "limbo" allowing the Catholic church to collect enormous amounts of money for priests to pray these dear souls out of limbo? Does the Catholic church provide a warranty and are they refunding moneys collected in error?

My religious affiliation after experiencing personal salvation 30+ yrs. ago includes many years attending and serving in conservative Baptist churches so I thought it only right that I present their doctrinal beliefs regarding the act of baptism. I should point out that I'm not referring to the reformed group that identified themselves as "Strict Baptist".

I found the following information on a website titled, "Baptist Distinctives" and thought it was a rather accurate description of what the vast majority of Baptist and non-denominational evangelical groups believe regarding baptism.

(<https://www.baptistdistinctives.org/resources/articles/believers-baptism/>)

## *Baptism Is Symbolic*

*Baptists believe that the Bible teaches that baptism is important but not necessary for salvation. For example, the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43), Saul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-18) and the people gathered in Cornelius' house (Acts 10:24-48) all experienced salvation without the necessity of baptism. In his sermon at Pentecost, Peter urged those who had repented and believed*

*in Christ to be baptized, not that baptism was necessary for salvation but as a testimony that they had been saved (Acts 2:1-41).*

(Author's Note: This last statement is patently false but we'll learn all about that as we study the Evolution of Baptism.)

*Thus, baptism is symbolic and not sacramental. Baptists believe that the Bible teaches that baptism symbolizes that a person has been saved and is not a means of salvation. Baptism is not a means of channeling saving grace but rather is a way of testifying that saving grace has been experienced. It does not wash away sin but symbolizes the forgiveness of sin through faith in Christ.*

*While baptism is not essential for salvation, it is a very important requirement for obedience to the Lord. Christ commanded his disciples to baptize (Matthew 28:19) and therefore baptism is a form of obedience to Jesus as Lord. Baptism is one way that a person declares, "Jesus is Lord."*

The following statement is a fair representation of what most Baptist and non-denomination churches teach.

*"Baptism is the first step of obedience in the life of a Christian (Matt. 28:18-20). It is also a way for Christians to be publicly identified with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism does not bring salvation (Eph. 2:8-9), but symbolizes our new life, much like a wedding ring symbolizes one's marital status."*

Admittedly, the author aligns closest to the Baptist doctrine of baptism (at least what I've presented above) but suspects even the Baptist fall short of the actual mark. In the balance of this little study of mine, I'll address the issue of

how man-made doctrinal beliefs have crept

# The Evolution of Baptism

into the church and have subsequently been fully embraced as Biblical fact.

## What is Included in this Study?

This little study is simply going to look at what the Bible actually says about the act of baptism and most importantly, we are going to learn the purpose of baptism and how the act evolved throughout the New Testament. Yep, that's correct; not all baptisms are created equally. This is a topic that's near and dear to my heart because I came from a church that taught me I was "born again in baptism" but I can honestly confirm that my heart wasn't changed until received the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal savior when I was in my 20's.

Full discloser: I absolutely detest and completely oppose the control machinations associated with the act of baptism implemented by religious organizations, both current and historically. This little study is going to analyze every occurrence of baptism I could find in my Bible. What I'm not going to waste my time on is explaining how all these religious groups conjured up the multitude of doctrinal differences regarding the subject. As Harry Morgan used to say on the old Dragnet show, "Just the facts ma'am".

## Why Baptism

Have you ever wondered why God the Father sent John the Baptist to baptize the children of Israel? Has it ever struck you as "odd" that grown people would voluntarily subject themselves to be publicly dunked in water by some religious leader (pastor)? Well, it's certainly crossed my mind a time or two.

The first thing we need to investigate is where the very idea of baptism originated. There are a lot of ideas regarding the origin of baptism but

I'm only interested in what I can find in the Bible so I'll spare you all the sophistry and supposition found in books and on the internet but I'm just going to stick with the facts.

Let's see if we can find any OT reference to the act of baptism.

John 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

John 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

John 1:21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

John 1:22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

John 1:23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

John 1:24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

John 1:25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

John 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

John 1:27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

Before we look at the OT for clues to the origination of baptism, it's important that we understand that the priest and Levites of Jerusalem were confidently expecting either the Christ, Elias (aka Elijah), or "that prophet" (a reference to Moses) to appear on the scene and begin baptizing the children of

# The Evolution of Baptism

Israel. They made this abundantly clear as they questioned John the Baptist regarding his purpose and credentials for administering baptism to Israel. For some reason, the priests and Levites were convinced that Christ, Elias, and / or Moses expected (prophesied) to perform the act of water baptism. Admittedly, this is an enigma to me because I don't find a clear OT prophetic assertion regarding the act of water baptism but I'll give you what I've found.

Exo 30:17 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Exo 30:18 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.

Exo 30:19 For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:

Exo 30:20 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:

Exo 30:21 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.

Aaron and his sons, the Levitical priests, were required to wash their hands and feet before entering the Mosaic tabernacle. The wash water was held in a brazen laver which was specifically located between the tabernacle and the congregation. Many authors over the years have rightly identified the OT tabernacle as a "type of Christ" meaning the symbology contained in the detailed instructions God provides to Moses points directly to the redemptive work of Christ in the NT.

Therefore, I will forgo boring the reader with rehearsing this information. What I will do is identify the direct and irrefutable correlation between the OT tabernacle and that of Jesus Christ being a new and better tabernacle.

Heb 9:1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. (Mosaic Tabernacle, see vs. 2)

Heb 9:2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.

Heb 9:3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

Heb 9:4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

Heb 9:5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Heb 9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

Heb 9:7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

Heb 9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

Heb 9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

# The Evolution of Baptism

Heb 9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Heb 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

Heb 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Heb 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

Heb 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Heb 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

That is a very powerful passage of scripture that ties directly the OT tabernacle to the body of Jesus Christ which is “a greater and more perfect tabernacle”. We can clearly see the connection between the two tabernacles; what about the washing aspect of the instructions provided to Moses in the book of Exodus? I honestly don’t know. What I’m presenting regarding the admittedly loose association between the OT Levitical priest washing his hands and feet prior to entering the Mosaic tabernacle is all I can find.

Here’s something to consider. In Jn. 13,

during the famous Passover meal that Jesus shares with his disciples just before his crucifixion, the Lord washes their feet.

John 13:3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

John 13:4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

John 13:5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

John 13:6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

John 13:7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

John 13:8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

John 13:9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

John 13:10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

Here Jesus washes their feet but, contrary to the OT priest washing, he does not wash their hands. It’s instructive that Peter wanted his head washed as well as his feet and hands. There’s a deeper meaning to the foot washing ceremony (vs 7) but I’m not certain it ties into our study of baptism.

Regardless of whether my suspicions are correct or not, the fact remains that the priests and Levites of Jerusalem were expecting

# The Evolution of Baptism

either the Christ, Elias, or Moses to begin baptizing Israel at some time in the future. It's also important to recognize that they had this expectation BEFORE Christ was publicly revealed to Israel. That was a free "rabbit trail", now back to our study.

## John the Baptist

The first major clue we have to study regarding the act of baptism would obviously be John the Baptist, his purpose and ministry. John is very unique individual and it's going to take a considerable amount of time to fully investigate all there is to learn about him so let's get started.

A thorough study of the doctrine of Baptism would be woefully incomplete without an in-depth knowledge of John the Baptist ministry and purpose on earth. John is a unique character and was given a highly specific purpose during Jesus first advent. John appears once again before the second advent but alas, I'm getting ahead of myself and this little study. Let's see what we can learn about John.

### Accreditation

Our first task is to learn what God records in the Bible regarding the ministry of John the Baptist. The prophecy of John's birth is recorded in Lk 1 and was given to Zacharias as he was offering incense in the temple.

Luk 1:11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

Luk 1:12 And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

Luk 1:13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

Luk 1:14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

Luk 1:15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Luk 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

There's a lot of doctrinal meat in those verses and we'll need to return to them several times as we investigate John's life and ministry. In vs. 17, the angel of the Lord proclaims that John will go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias (Elias is simply the Greek form of Elijah; therefore, Elias means Elijah / interchangeable).

This next passage is a prophecy delivered by John's father Zacharias on the day John was circumcised and named. Zacharias had been struck dumb by the angel when he questioned the Lord's ability to open Elisabeth's womb and issue the promised son. What follows are the first words spoken by Zacharias after his tongue was loosed.

Luk 1:67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

Luk 1:68 Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

Luk 1:69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

Luk 1:70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

# The Evolution of Baptism

Luk 1:71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

Luk 1:72 To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

Luk 1:73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

Luk 1:74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

Luk 1:75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

Luk 1:76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

Luk 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people **by** the remission of their sins,

Luk 1:78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

Luk 1:79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

NOTE: Please notice that, according to vs. 77, the knowledge of salvation was given BY the remission of their sins. Now let's compare Lk. 3:2-6.

Luk 3:2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

Luk 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, **preaching the baptism of repentance** for the remission of sins;

Luk 3:4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Luk 3:5 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;

Luk 3:6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

These passages are congruent with what we noticed in Lk. 1:77. Once again, we see the direct association of John's baptism with both Israel's repentance resulting in Israel's remission of sins AND all flesh seeing the salvation of God. I believe that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" when Jesus ultimately establishes the long awaiting kingdom promised to the OT Jews which we see fulfilled in Rev. 19 and 20.

Notice the location where John was preaching and baptizing. Luk 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan,

This is important to anyone that knew something about God's dealing with OT Israel. The act of Israel crossing the river Jordan represented the fulfillment of God's promise to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt and usher them into the "promised land" of Canaan. Israel wandered in the wilderness for over 40 yrs. awaiting the day that God would lead them to that land of milk and honey. The OT fulfillment of God's promise was earthly, temporal, and resulted in many years of hardship while Israel was ruled by ungodly and unrighteous kings.

The following verses explain a well-established principle repeated numerous times throughout Biblical history.

1Co 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

1Co 15:46 **Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and**

# The Evolution of Baptism

afterward that which is spiritual.

1Co 15:47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

1Co 15:48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

Notice especially the principle mentioned in vs. 46; the natural precedes the heavenly. The first man Adam appeared long before the last Adam (a.k.a. Jesus Christ). Believers in Christ receive the natural body before they receive their heavenly body. As we are about to learn in this study, the natural baptism (water) preceded the heavenly, or spiritual baptism of the Holy Ghost. In like manner, God first gives Israel a natural kingdom ruled by human kings that had all the failures and pitfalls of man's natural tendencies. This is sharply contrasted by the heavenly kingdom (i.e. kingdom of heaven) promised to the OT Jews and ruled by a heavenly king, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham receives the natural (fleshy) circumcision as a sign signifying the future heavenly circumcision of the heart that Israel will one day experience (Jer. 31). Also, Israel receives the sign of the natural sabbath which was to be a reminder of the promised heavenly Sabbath that Jesus Christ will one day bring to fruition. The first king God gave to Israel was a very natural man Saul; the second king was a man after God's own heart, David. As you can clearly see, there are many cases in the Bible where the natural precedes the heavenly.

All this to say, the fact that John was preaching and baptizing in the river Jordan holds a special significance to the nation of Israel in that it represents the fulfillment of God's promise for a new heavenly kingdom as well as a new heavenly king.

Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

Mat 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Notice also in Mat. 3 that John was preaching in the wilderness which once again ties this NT event to the OT Jews that wandered in the wilderness before receiving the Promised Land and kingdom.

In spite of all the prophecies spoken regarding John the Baptist, he wasn't without his doubts regarding the purpose and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Mat 11:2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

Mat 11:3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

NOTE: This is the same John who said this about Jesus in John 1:

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 1:30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

John 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

Notice that the purpose of John's baptism was very narrow. It was only to reveal Jesus Christ as Messiah to Israel. It's crucial to recognize that John's entire ministry was targeted exclusively toward the children of Israel.

John 1:32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a



# The Evolution of Baptism

dove, and it abode upon him.

John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

John 1:34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

John's confusion as stated in Mat. 11:3 stemmed from his limited understanding of the OT prophecies and the ministry God had given him to accomplish. John recognized that his earthly ministry was about to end without being fully completed; therefore, John seriously doubted the success of his ministry because he was in prison awaiting a death sentence. John was told from childhood by his father and others that his mission was to prepare the way of the Lord. John was forbidden the enjoyment of both wine and strong drink all of his days because of the prophecy delivered by the angel of the Lord in Lk. 1. Wine was certainly an important part of the Jewish culture and John's abstinence of the fruit of vine was a constant reminder of his earthly mission.

In addition to John doubting the success of his own mission, more importantly he began doubting the veracity of Jesus Christ as Messiah. Those lonely frightful hours sitting in prison awaiting his gruesome beheading caused John to question in his heart and mind how it was that he could be the messenger foretold by the angel of the Lord in Lk. 1:17 and prophesied by Zacharias in Lk. 1:76. And if John is not that messenger, how could

Jesus be the promised Messiah King? Good question, I might add!

Now let's look at what Jesus Christ said about John in Mat. 11. The Lord gave John this amazing testimony on the day when John was understandably confused because of his dire situation.

Mat 11:4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

Mat 11:5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Mat 11:6 And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

NOTE: Notice that Jesus does not answer John's question directly. It's almost as though the Lord answers John's question with a follow up question, "John, why aren't you paying attention? Look at all the miracles I'm working!"

Now let's look at the public announcement the Lord made AFTER John's disciples departed.

Mat 11:7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

Mat 11:8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses.

Mat 11:9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

Mat 11:10 For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Mat 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them

# The Evolution of Baptism

that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

**Mat 11:12** And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

Mat 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

Mat 11:15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

These passages of scripture are pregnant with heavy doctrine that very few people take the time to research, chiefly because they are afraid to believe the simplicity of what's written and the way it's written. This will take a little time to dissect and carefully analyze. It's time to eliminate the background distractions and don your thinking cap. Here we go!

In Mat 11:9 Jesus describes John as more than a prophet. Hmm? I find that instructive. In Mat. 11:10 Jesus makes a bold claim that John is "he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

The angel of the Lord said this about John:

Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Luke 1 records that John's father, Zacharias, was filled with the Holy Ghost and said this about his son John.

Luk 1:67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

Luk 1:76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

Luk 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Jesus, the angel of the Lord, and Zacharias being filled with the Holy Ghost, all prophesied that John the Baptist would prepare the way of the Lord.

Let's look at Mal. 3:1 from whence this prophecy is quoted.

Mal 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Mal 3:2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

Mal 3:3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

NOTE: Lest anyone think that the events described in Mal. Ch. 3 applies to Jesus first coming, please read those verses carefully. Mal. Ch. 3 references a time of purging, purifying, and deep spiritual cleansing of the sons of Levi. None of that occurred during the first advent and it certainly hasn't happened since Jesus ascension. Notice also that, "the Lord, whom ye seek, shall **suddenly** come to his temple". Jesus didn't SUDDENLY come to his temple. He was born with little notice but he lived for 30 yrs. prior to beginning his

# The Evolution of Baptism

earthly ministry and he never did “come to his temple”. This is not suddenly. Rev. 19 and 20 describe a sudden appearance.

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Jesus will rule all the nations when he returns to earth the second time.

Rev 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Rev\_2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Rev\_12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

Rev\_19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

The first advent was certainly not “the great and dreadful day of the LORD”. However, look at what Jesus says about John in Mat. 11:14.

Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come. (BTW, Elias is simply the Greek form of Elijah)

Now that’s fascinating!! We read in the OT that God will send his messenger to prepare the way before me (meaning God). Jesus confirms that John is this messenger and he also confirms that the “me” in Mal. Ch. 2 is Jesus himself. Another proof text that Jesus is God. In addition, Zacharias, being filled with the Holy Ghost, proclaims that his child, “shalt

be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways”.

One more important observation in Mat. 11:14. Notice two big little words “if” and “it” as well as the conditional promise associated. “IF ye will receive IT!” What is the “it” they were to receive? The word “it” is a pronoun that points backward to something already mentioned in the previous text. Well, verse 13 offers nothing that could apply to the pronoun “it” used in vs. 14 so we are forced to continue moving backwards in our text. However, vs. 12 reveals the noun associated with the pronoun “it” and we see that Jesus is talking about the “kingdom of heaven”. Jesus is telling the crowd that **IF** ye (children of Israel) will receive “the kingdom of heaven” **THEN** John the Baptist is Elijah. The IF / THEN statement is a promise from God that the kingdom of heaven was fully available to be ushered in during Jesus’ first advent.

Notice how Jesus promotes the doctrine of free will. He tells his audience that they have a choice to make; **IF** they make the correct choice by receiving their Messiah and his kingdom of heaven, **THEN** John will fulfill the role of Elijah the messenger before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. I know it’s hard for some of you to believe so I’ll provide some additional supporting evidence for those skeptical readers. BTW, I like honest skeptics because we are of a kindred spirit.

I’ve added below three verses that support this understanding. The first verse was spoken by John the Baptist; the second was spoken by Jesus; the third is what Jesus told his disciples to preach when he sent them out as missionaries.

Mat\_3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the

# The Evolution of Baptism

kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mat\_4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mat\_10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

## **Information Interlude**

This broaches a difficult issue misunderstood by most Christians. The kingdom of heaven is NOT the same as the kingdom of God. First of all, they are spelled differently and God is not heaven, heaven is not God. OK, so “what’s the difference?” Plenty!

Heaven is a physical, literal place that exists somewhere whereas, according to Jesus in John 4:24, God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

I don’t have time to develop this completely, but the kingdom of heaven is a literal, physical kingdom that God the Father promised the children of Israel in the OT and He is compelled by his promise to bring it to fruition when the Lord returns as described in Rev. 19 and 20. The reason it’s called the kingdom of heaven is because the Lord Jesus Christ will descend from heaven with a heavenly host and he will usher in a heavenly reign while ruling from the temple in Jerusalem. This is the SUDDEN appearing mentioned in Malachi. His literal PHYSICAL (not invisible!) kingdom will indeed be “heaven on earth” and that is what God was offering the children of Israel when John and Jesus were preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. It’s important to realize that the kingdom of heaven was only promised to the children of Israel; therefore, the kingdom of heaven belongs exclusively to the Jews. Rev. 19 and 20 is a literal physical fulfillment of the kingdom

promised to Israel with David’s heir apparent sitting in Jerusalem on David’s throne.

Briefly, Jesus said, “God is a spirit”; therefore, the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom consisting of every believer, Jew and Gentile alike. All believers today are the Lord’s subjects in the kingdom of God while the kingdom of heaven remains a future kingdom that Jesus establishes at this return (Rev. 19 and 20).

Luke 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

Luke 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

Luke 17 makes it quite clear that the kingdom of God cannot be the same kingdom God promised to the OT Jews and ultimately fulfills in Rev. 19 and 20 because every man, woman, and child on earth will *OBSERVE* the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. In fact, there will be no place to hide from the probing eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ when he finally establishes his physical earthly kingdom.

One more proof that the kingdom of God is NOT the same as the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 21:43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

In Mat. 21 Jesus warns his audience that the kingdom of God will be taken from you (Jews) and given to another nation (Gentiles). While God can do that with the spiritual kingdom (kingdom of God), God CANNOT renege on His OT promises made to the nation of Israel.

# The Evolution of Baptism

Therefore, God is compelled to deliver the physical kingdom (kingdom of heaven) to the children of Israel, and the Lord Jesus Christ must sit upon the throne of David just as God promised he would. God is not a man that he should lie and His gifts and callings are without repentance.

Luk 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

This prophecy has not yet come to fruition but it's fulfillment is non-optional and will be witnessed by the population of the entire globe.

Back to our study.

I hope you are paying close attention. So far I've shown you three very credible witnesses (Jesus, the angel of the Lord, and Zacharias filled with the Holy Ghost) whose testimonies all agree that John is Elias (Elijah), namely the prophet foretold in the book of Malachi whose purpose and ministry is to prepare the way of the Lord before that great and dreadful day.

Now I'm going to show you what John the Baptist said about himself when the religious leader inquired, "who are thou?"

John 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

John 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

John 1:21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

John 1:22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

John 1:23 He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

John 1:24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

John 1:25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

John 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

John 1:27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

John 1:28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

This presents quite the doctrinal conundrum. Apparently, John missed the message as to who he was. This is one of those famous "Bible contradictions" that people (Christian as well non-Christians) like to mention when pointing out the assumed (wrongly I must add) inaccuracy of scripture. I believe these purported contradictions exist to reveal some of the most fascinating doctrinal jewels in the Bible.

Let's see if we can find one.

**Angel of Lord:** Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

**Jesus:** Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come.

**Zacharias reportedly filled with the Holy Ghost prophesied:**

# The Evolution of Baptism

Luk 1:76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

Luk 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Then we have John's testimony which directly contradicts the first three. I sense this apparent contradiction reveals an important lesson regarding God, understanding His record provided to mankind through the Bible, and the intricacies of His workings.

John 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

John 1:21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

My first inclination is to suggest that this obvious contradiction demands that someone be proven wrong. We know assuredly that Jesus is not wrong, nor the angel of the Lord, and Zacharias, while filled with the Holy Ghost, testifies in agreement with the first two; therefore, a logical conclusion is that John must have been mistaken. Admittedly, John being in error is a distinct possibility; however, there is another possible explanation that allows all four witnesses to be infallible in their proclamations. Let's take a closer look.

Mat. 17 offers another valuable clue regarding John, his purpose, and ministry.

It's important to note that John the Baptist is beheaded in Mat. 14, which is between the first quote (Mat. 11) and this next quote (Mat. Ch. 17).

Mat 17:9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Mat 17:10 And his disciples asked him,

saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

Mat 17:11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. (FUTURE!)

Mat 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, (PAST!) and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Mat 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

According to Mat. 17, the children of Israel failed the test presented to them in Mat. 11. "They knew him (John) not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed"; AND, in doing so, they rejected the kingdom of heaven. Honestly, I'm not sure which came first, the rejection of the kingdom of heaven or the denial of John. However, I do know that John WOULD HAVE BEEN ELIAS had Israel received Jesus as their Messiah and John as his messenger. The reason John could not fulfill the ministry of Elias that was given him is because Israel refused both the kingdom and Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

Now it's time to learn an important lesson about the way God deals with prophecy and the fulfillment of it. We just learned that Jesus said in Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. Remember that big little word "IF"? John the Baptist fulfilling the role of Elias was completely conditional upon the Jews voluntarily receiving the IT referenced two verses above, namely the kingdom of heaven. Quick note: This strongly supports the doctrine of free will. The children of Israel needed to recognize and embrace Jesus as their Messiah AND receive the kingdom promised in the OT before John could fulfill the ministry

# The Evolution of Baptism

of Elias “prior to the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Mal 4:5).

Lk 1:17 proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elias (Elijah).

Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias,

When you think about it, God went through an enormous amount of trouble giving the children of Israel the opportunity to reject the kingdom of heaven and Jesus Christ their Messiah. The reason I believe in the free will of man is because I believe it would have been a colossal waste of time and effort if God didn't actually give Israel the opportunity to RECEIVE the kingdom and their Messiah. In other words, I believe the offer that God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, makes to the nation of Israel is legitimate. Israel had the capacity to repent of their long history of their sins, fully embrace John's water baptism for the remission of their sins, recognize and receive Jesus Christ as the promised Jewish Messiah, and enter into the long awaited kingdom of heaven promised in the OT. I don't believe God's offer was utterly futile because God had predetermined that Israel would refuse his generous offer.

It's important to remember that when Jesus is walking the earth none of the NT scriptures had been written yet. Our NT Bible could look significantly different had the Jews repented and believed during the first advent. I know my speculation is entire academic now because the Jews reject Christ and his kingdom and the record of the NT stands in direct opposition to what I'm suggesting. I simply want readers to understand that history would look vastly different had the Jews responded affirmatively to God's first offer of the kingdom.

Even the OT record supports my understanding. The nation of Israel was offered the land of milk and honey in Num. 13. As you'll recall, Moses sent spies on a reconnaissance mission into the land and they came back with a good report of the land saying indeed it did flow with milk and honey. However, they provided an evil report regarding the indigenous population of this Promised Land and they self-determined that the children of Israel were not strong enough to conquer the inhabitants.

Jos\_5:6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

The children of Israel entered the Promised Land only after ALL the previous generation of the children of Israel (save Joshua and Caleb) had passed on to their eternal inheritance. This is another example of how the earthly typically precedes the heavenly. Notice that God OFFERED Israel the Promised Land the first time and UNCONDITIONALLY brought them into the Promised Land the second time.

We can draw a parallel from this event and note that the New Testament plays out in the same fashion as the OT. God OFFERED the Messiah and the kingdom at the first advent but Israel refused both. The children of Israel are, in a sense, wandering around in the wilderness at this present time similar to their experience with Moses. However, at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the long awaited Jewish Messiah, God the Father will make no OFFER and Israel will not have

# The Evolution of Baptism

the right of refusal for their Messiah and the promised kingdom when Chris appears with his army. Rev 19 and 20.

We have also proven that John the Baptist WAS INDEED Elias but the children of Israel rejected both their Messiah and his messenger.

Mat 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Mat 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

We also know that John (a.k.a. Elias / Elijah) will perform the following acts:

Luk 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Luk 1:76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

Luk 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

In Luke 7 we read:

Luk 7:27 This is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Let's analyze the Bible record of John's baptism.

Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

Mat 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mat 3:11 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:

**Mat 3:12** Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Mark confirms this.

Mar 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Notice that in Mark 1:8 John clearly contrasts "water baptism" with "the Holy Ghost baptism". The two baptisms are quite distinct but we will get into that a little later.

**Mar 1:4** John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Mark 1:4 sums up the purpose of John's baptism succinctly. John was preaching "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins".

This dovetails nicely with Zacharias prophecy:

Luk 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Notice carefully that the knowledge of salvation prophesied to the children of Israel in Lk. 1 was inextricably tied to the remission of sins. Notice also that this knowledge was given exclusively to "his people" (i.e. Jews) and not the Gentiles. It's crucial to remember



# The Evolution of Baptism

that the first time Jesus came to earth he came for his own people.

John 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Mat\_10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Mat\_15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

It's difficult for most people to understand that the first purpose of Jesus earthly ministry was to offer the promised kingdom to Israel and transition the children of Israel from the OT law based economy to the NT grace based economy. This ministry did NOT include the non-Jewish nations (i.e. Gentiles) because the Gentiles were NEVER under the OT law. If you find this information confusing, please re-read, "The Practical Look at the Law" study.

The topic is about to get even more interesting. Notice that Luke 1:77 says, "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people". I'm focusing first on the "give knowledge of salvation" phrase. John said it several times and Jesus said it repeatedly in the book of Matthew; the kingdom of heaven is at hand, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. What did they mean by this phrase? We've briefly discussed that the kingdom of heaven (koh) is a future fulfillment of OT prophecy when Jesus comes down from heaven and establishes a literal, physical, heavenly kingdom in a literal, physical place, namely, Jerusalem.

Isaiah 11 describes the kingdom of heaven Christ mentions repeatedly and Israel was

expecting to receive the KOH at the first advent of Christ.

Isa 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

Isa 11:2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

Isa 11:3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

Isa 11:4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

Isa 11:5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

Isa 11:6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

Isa 11:7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

Isa 11:8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

Isa 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Isa 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the

# The Evolution of Baptism

people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Isa 11:11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

Isa 11:12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

The children of Israel were expecting a Messiah King to rescue them from all their earthly enemies because that's what God the Father promised them. See further proof of this in the following verses.

Luk 1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

Luk 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Jer 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous

Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

Jer 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Jer 23:7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

Jer 23:8 But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Notice the distinct difference between the two testimonies described in Jer. 23:7 and 8. We see that verse. 7 describes what the nations said about the children of Israel after their exodus from Egypt. That's the first miraculous deliverance performed by God through Moses.

In sharp contrast, vs. 8 describes not a national exodus but a re-gathering of the house of Israel out of the north country and from all the countries where God had driven His children. This describes a future gathering because it hasn't happened yet. How do I know that? Because Jesus is not reigning from Jerusalem on David's throne, Israel is not dwelling safely, and judgment and justice is certainly not being executed on earth. No, this kingdom will be fulfilled at some time in future EXACTLY as scripture describes it.

2 Sam 7:16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

Jer 33:17 For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want (*or lack*) a man to sit upon the

# The Evolution of Baptism

throne of the house of Israel;

The Pharisees and other religious leaders, as well as the disciples, expected Jesus to restore the promised kingdom to Israel and establish his rule while sitting on David's throne.

**Act 1:6** When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Act 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

That's what I believe Jesus and John were referencing when they kept repeating, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand".

I'll share an interesting thought that I've been pondering in my heart as I was preparing this in- depth study of John. I believe that God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the promised Messiah (Jesus) and the earthly kingdom promised in the OT (kingdom of heaven). According to what Jesus proclaimed in Mat. 11:14, John was ordained (prophesied or predestinated) to be Elias *IF, IF, IF* the children of Israel received the promised kingdom of heaven. We learned in Mat. 17 that Jesus informs the audience:

Mat 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

By Mat. 17 Jesus acknowledges that the course of future events is fully established and the Son of man **will** suffer the same fate as John. Once John is killed, there is no deviating from the inevitable crucifixion.

Here's my thought; what *IF* the children of Israel had corporately recognized Jesus as

Messiah and received the kingdom of heaven as was pointed out in Mat. 11:14? John was preaching a baptism of repentance FOR the remission of sin. If somehow, through John's baptism, Israel sins could be remitted, and since John was teaching a national salvation exclusively for the children of Israel, would the Lord Jesus Christ still have had to suffer the crucifixion? This is simply an interesting thought to ponder because we know from the historical record the ultimate outcome. I acknowledge that there are plenty of verses in the old and new testaments that would contradict my hypothetical postulation such as:

**Heb 9:22** And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

There are also numerous OT scriptures that talk about a suffering savior (Ps. 22, Isa. 53, etc.). I'm not disputing the Biblical record and I fully embrace the fact that the crucifixion was indeed part of God's plan for the ages; however, I also believe that Christ's offer of the kingdom of heaven was fully legitimate and I believe that the kingdom of heaven was indeed at hand during Christ's ministry because that's exactly what Christ said...repeatedly. Why does the Bible claim that John's baptism of repentance was FOR the remission of sin if without the shedding of blood is no remission?

In fact, Peter in Acts 2 repeats this message even after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Act 2:38 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.

This I know, the book of Hebrews was not written when John was conducting his baptismal ministry nor was it written when

# The Evolution of Baptism

Peter was baptizing in Acts 2. In fact Paul was still persecuting Christians at that time; therefore, all of his epistles were not penned.

Conclusion: John the Baptist appeared in the spirit and power of Elias (Elijah) and indeed would have been Elias had the children of Israel recognized and embraced their Messiah (Jesus) and accepted the promised kingdom of heaven. But instead, the children of Israel refused both their Messiah and his messenger (John) therefore the kingdom of heaven was not ushered in and Jesus did NOT establish a kingdom while sitting on David's throne. And ultimately, because the children of Israel summarily rejected the kingdom of heaven and God's national salvation of Israel, therefore John the Baptist did not fulfill the ministry of Elias in preparing the way of the Lord before that great and dreadful day. This rejection was the reason behind God ultimately turning from the Jews and redirecting his salvation to the nations (Gentiles).

BTW, I realize that the salvation of the Gentiles was clearly foretold in the OT. However, that means that diligent students of the Jewish sacred scriptures that lived at the time of Jesus should not have been surprised by the final outcome of Jesus ministry. The important lesson to learn is that God the Father, in order to maintain his integrity in light of OT promises made to Israel, was compelled to make a legitimate offer of the kingdom of heaven to the Jews before throwing His arms open wide to all the "whosoever" of the world and dispensing the age of grace to EVERYONE who will come to the water of life freely.

Rom 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy

mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Rom 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Rom 10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

## So what's the Big Deal about John the Baptist?

Good question. The answer is, Plenty! We've just learned (many of us for the first time) that John the Baptist had a very unique ministry. If you thought the information we just covered regarding John was exciting, it's about to get even more interesting.

In my honest opinion, one of the most egregious aspects of religious organizations is the fact that every one of them, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, wants to confine God in some sort of "doctrinal sarcophagus" where God is not allowed to be utterly wild, untamed, imaginative and unpredictable, vivaciously and uniquely working in the hearts of people throughout the world. The unspoken goal of religious organizations is to diligently study the Bible SO they can fully understand God. You see, IF they can understand Him, THEN they

# The Evolution of Baptism

can control Him and constrain His machinations to their predetermined theological doctrines. Once again, we are confronted head on with mankind's desire to be in control of their own destiny.

I'm speaking from firsthand experience. A number of years ago I found myself trying to understand why God's Holy Spirit works in the hearts of some people while many others seem to be completely unaffected by the good news of the gospel. Why did I receive the "full wad" but some of my loved ones have shown little or no interest in the gospel message. I started entertaining the idea that I could get God to fulfill my desires to see my loved ones "get saved" if I just prayed the right words, lived the right life, and did all the right things. Unfortunately, all my best efforts FAILED miserably. I became highly legalistic and began constant introspection trying to discern what I needed to change so my prayer would be answered in the way I desired. I ultimately realized I was looking for a God that would be my servant and I was setting myself up for a spiritual and emotional tragedy.

I'm sure the average reader is wondering where I'm going with this train of thought and what in the world it has to do with John's ministry. A careful observation of Christian doctrine reveals that religions suffer from something called, "Male answer syndrome". What I mean by that is that religions, and religious leaders, feel compelled to fully understand the workings of God. This, of course, causes great tension and sharp divisions among the numerous religious groups because everyone believes that the emotionally held doctrines which are unique to their particular group are superior to the emotionally held doctrines of all opposing

groups. A brief review of history reveals that almost all wars have been fomented as a result of strongly held religious dogmas.

I've come to the conclusion that religions like to keep God in a box so they can control Him. They also like to ensure that the doctrines they espouse are easily understood and simple to explain so they can use these doctrines to control their congregants. In other words, religions like neat, tidy doctrines without any loose ends.

What we're about to explore are loose ends everyone ignores because the information doesn't fit neatly into the religious doctrinal box. And here's my point, don't be afraid to believe the Bible as it's written. It's perfectly OK to be different from the crowd when you have God's written word on your side since you and God form a majority.

Let's look at what happens shortly after John the Baptist is beheaded.

Mat 17:1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

Mat 17:2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

Mat 17:3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

Mat 17:4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

# The Evolution of Baptism

Mat 17:5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

Mat 17:6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

Mat 17:7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

Mat 17:8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Mat 17:9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Mat 17:10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

Mat 17:11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

Mat 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Mat 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Let's see if we understand this correctly. The angel of the Lord prophesied the following about John the Baptist:

Luk 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of

the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Zacharias, being filled with the Holy Ghost, made the following proclamation regarding John:

Luk 1:76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

Luk 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Jesus had this to say about John:

Mat 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come.

Jesus also said this about John:

Mat 17:11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

Mat 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Mat 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

John is beheaded in Mat. 14, and now in Mat. 17 we see Elias (not John the Baptist) appearing with Moses on what's typically referred to as the mount of transfiguration. It's interesting that the disciples somehow recognized both Moses and Elias. Not sure how, but they did. They certainly didn't have ancient photos or painting hanging on their walls because that would

# The Evolution of Baptism

have been considered a graven image strictly verboten in Jewish culture.

We are about to see that Moses and Elias (a.k.a. Elijah) have one more crucial mission to fulfill on earth because, just as promised in the OT book of Malachi and by the Lord himself, these two witnesses will reappear just before the second coming to prepare the way of the Lord. Let's look at Rev. 11.

Rev 11:3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Rev 11:4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

Rev 11:5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

Rev 11:6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

Do you recognize the two witnesses by the description provided in Rev. 11:6? Moses is quite obvious to everyone who knows something of the OT because the book of Exodus is familiar to most Christians. If they haven't read the book of Exodus, they've at least seen the epic Charlton Heston movie, "The Ten Commandments". You'll recall that Moses turned the water into blood and tormented Egypt with numerous plagues prior to Pharaoh finally releasing the children of

Israel from bondage.

Elijah (Elias) is not as well-known but he's the prophet that shut up the heaven that it rain not during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel.

**1Ki 17:1** And Elijah the Tishbite, *who was of the inhabitants of Gilead*, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

The study of John the Baptist gets a little messy and you'll not see this information bandied about in religious literature. To be honest, even I don't fully understand the intersection of John the Baptist with Elias (Elijah) but we need to learn what we can from what God provides in the Bible. The children of Israel, especially the religious leaders, were looking for and expecting Elias to appear before the Messiah. In fact it's obvious that the Jewish leaders knew something big was afoot when John began baptizing in the wilderness because they pointedly questioned John as to whether or not he was Elias.

John 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

John 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

John 1:21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

We've already covered these verses in depth but I'm trying to explain that Elias still needs to fulfill the OT prophecy found in the book of Malachi because Israel refused their Messiah and the kingdom of heaven when Jesus appeared the first time. Contrary to popular belief, the kingdom of heaven was NOT established and Jesus is NOT reigning today

# The Evolution of Baptism

as an earthly king; not YET but he will soon.

John 18:33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

John 18:34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

John 18:35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

John 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Did you catch that phrase in Jn. 18:36? Jesus admits that his kingdom was not of this world and then he further explains that, "**but now is my kingdom not from hence**". In other words, at the time of his crucifixion, Jesus was not establishing an earthly kingdom. This is sharply contrasted by the earthly kingdom Jesus will establish in Rev. 19 and 20. Jesus never denies that he will one day be an earthly king; however, he clearly spells out his mission at the time of his first advent in vs. 37.

Jesus answers Pilate's question, "Art thou a king then?" with the following:

Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. **To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.** Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Jesus mission was to bear witness unto the truth. Remember, at the time Jesus appeared before Pilate the Jews had already rejected and killed John the Baptist and they had also rejected Jesus as Messiah. There was no way around the fact that Jesus was not going to set up the kingdom of heaven and his fate was sealed. That's why he answered the way he did. He couldn't deny that his kingdom will be established on earth at some time in the future but even Jesus was somehow willingly ignorant of when that would occur.

Mat 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Jesus is obviously talking about a future return.

Mar 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Mar 13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Mar 13:34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Mar 13:35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:



# The Evolution of Baptism

Mar 13:36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

Mar 13:37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Notice that what Jesus says of the coming of the “son of man” in Mk. 13:34. The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house

Notice that this Son of man “left his house”. Let’s look at another passage of scripture where Jesus clearly defines which house is his.

Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Mat 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Mat 15:22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

Mat 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

That’s clear to me. Jesus, talking in the third person about himself as the Son of man, likens himself to a man taking a far journey (heaven) who left his house (Israel) but he’s coming back once again to his house (Israel).

Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come.

Mat 17:11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

Mat 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but

have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Mat 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Notice also that Jesus, in Mat. 17:12 says, Elias truly **shall** first come, and restore all things. “Shall first come” acknowledges a FUTURE event, whereas in the very next verse Jesus says, “But I say unto you, That **Elias is come already**”. The phrase, “come already” tells us that Elias appearing has already happened. This is confirmed in verse 13, “Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist”.

As it’s plain to see, the Biblical character of Elias busts asunder all the neat little doctrinal sarcophaguses religion creates to control God and His story of the ages. Elias (Elijah) had a prominent role as an OT prophet, John the Baptist appeared in the power and spirit of Elias, Elias also appears on what is commonly referred to as the mount of transfiguration, and THEN we discover that Elias is scheduled to appear one more time just before the great and dreadful day of the Lord as described in Rev. 11. Ya just can’t keep this guy dead!!

## The Purpose of John and Elias

It’s not readily apparent to the average Bible student but understanding the prophetic purpose for the ministries of John and Elias is crucial to understanding the underlying objective for baptism. Actually, I should say objectives (plural) because we are about to learn that the administration and motivation for baptizing people evolves and morphs into something quite disparate from its origin as history unfolded following the ascension of Jesus. As I like to say, “Not all baptisms are created equal”.

# The Evolution of Baptism

## Evolution of Baptism

We are about to embark on a whirlwind tour of baptism as recorded in the Bible throughout the pages of the NT. My goal in this little study is to reveal how the purpose of baptism evolves and transforms from when it was first introduced by John the Baptist in the book of Matthew. We are also going to learn that all baptisms are NOT created equal. That last statement cannot be over emphasized! We are programmed to immediately think of water every time we see the word baptism and that's simply not correct.

We'll begin with one of my favorite passages of baptism found in Matthew Ch. 3. Matthew identifies 3 very unique and functionally distinct baptisms in one verse and only one of these baptisms has anything to do with water.

In Mat. 3:11 we will see the following three baptisms described.

John's baptism is performed by a human and administered with water unto the repentance of sin. This baptism is specifically and exclusively associated with the nation of Israel and I'll prove this shortly.

This is sharply contrasted by two clearly different baptisms performed, not by John nor any human, but by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. One baptism is dry as a bone but immersed with the Holy Ghost and the other baptism performed by Jesus is equally dry when he baptizes with fire (i.e. Lake of Fire).

Mat 3:11 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:

Mat 3:12 Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the

chaff with unquenchable fire.

Notice that John clearly distinguishes his water baptism from the two baptisms performed by Jesus Christ (i.e. Holy Ghost *and* fire). It's also important to recognize that John's baptism is BEFORE the resurrection. This little tidbit of information will be important as we study the evolution of baptism AFTER the resurrection and specifically through the book of Acts.

We will address the two baptisms attributed to the Lord after we conduct a deep dive investigation into John's baptism. However, it's vital to the basic understanding of the various baptisms that the reader recognize that these 3 baptisms are unique to one another and therefore must be studied separately.

I mentioned earlier that John's baptism was specifically for the nation of Israel. Let's look at the proof text for that statement.

John 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

We can thank John that he removed all doubt as to the purpose of his baptism. The expressed purpose for John's baptism was to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ to Israel. Period! Jn. 1:31 couldn't be any more clear on the subject.

However, there are skeptics in every bunch and I'm sure some of my readers are skeptical just now so let's dive a little deeper. We've already seen these verses in the course of learning who John truly was but they certainly bear repeating in this situation.

If you'll recall from Lk. 1, the angel of the Lord prophesied the following two verses regarding Zechariah's future child, namely John Baptist.

Luk 1:16 And many of the children of Israel

# The Evolution of Baptism

shall he turn to the Lord their God.

Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Notice that John's ministry was exclusively to the children of Israel and the purpose of John's baptism was to reveal Jesus to a nation that had been waiting for over one thousand five hundred years (1500 yrs.) for the arrival of the promised Messiah. The Israelites had been laboring under the bondage of the OT law for 1500 years.

We also know that God had chastened the nation of Israel many, many times over the course of their national history due their infidelity to God and the coveted Mosaic covenant as well as their persecution to God's prophets. Because of this all too common chastening process, the nation of Israel was very diligent to abstain from adopting other religions, with the obvious exception of all the plethora of man-made rules promoted by the Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers. My point is simple; God needed to send John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elias in order to prepare Israel for the coming of her Messiah because Jesus was about to completely revolutionize the traditional Mosaic faith. I cannot overemphasize this last point. Jesus was going to turn the Jewish faith 180 degrees around and upside down so God the Father sent someone, other than just the Lord himself, to bear witness of the Lord's ministry. However, history records that even Jesus himself, along with John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elias, was insufficient to redirect the Jews toward the promised kingdom.

It would be similar to someone growing up in

a country lead by a totalitarian dictator where even the thought of liberty and freedom was severely punished and often resulted in death. Everyone was expected to obey the magistrates without question and dissention was met with immediate violent physical force. In fact, obedience was so ubiquitous that family members would rat out other family members if someone was suspected of harboring thoughts of liberty. Then one day, out of the blue, a charismatic gentleman appears proclaiming unlimited, unmitigated LIBERTY to all those in bondage. What are you going to do? First of all, this revolutionary's message sounds far too good to be true so extreme doubt and abundant caution immediately fills your heart and mind. You've been conditioned since birth that liberty is incredibly dangerous and diametrically opposed to all government and religious leaders and especially as it pertains to your relationship with God. You are stuck in a quandary. Jesus has a powerful message but even John the Baptist comes to doubt Jesus authority and mission.

I, for one, don't blame the Jews for missing their Messiah. The contrast between the OT law based economy and the grace based LAWLESSNESS of the NT is such a radical paradigm shift that I can understand how they simply couldn't believe it and summarily dismissed the Lord as a false teacher proclaiming rank heresy and usurping the authority of Moses. That's why the synoptic gospels are filled with miracles, signs, and wonders.

1Co 1:22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

1Co 14:22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which

# The Evolution of Baptism

believe.

We see from these two verses that Jews *require* a sign, tongues *were for* a sign, and the purpose of signs was specifically to direct non-believing Jews to their long awaited loving Messiah. The purpose of the sign of tongues was never a gift used by tongue speakers for boasting. Just those two verses right there can clear up a lot of misunderstandings, but I digress.

As we know from Paul's epistles, the purpose for Jesus first advent was to transition the Jews from an extremely legalistic religious economy rooted in God's laws, statutes, and religious ceremonies into the grace based economy of salvation completely void of the laborious rituals required by OT law.

Gal 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

Gal 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

NOTE: Quick reminder. Gentiles are not, nor have they ever been "under the law". The OT law and promised blessings was a "quid pro quo" contract between God the Father and the Jewish nation. Jesus came to redeem the Israelites which had spent the previous 1500 years under the curse of the law and were awaiting the fulfillment of all the OT promises. It's interesting that God refers to the time Jesus appears as "the fulness of time".

In like fashion, God refers to the future transition of directing His attention (may I say dispensation?) from the Gentiles back once again to Jews as follows.

Rom 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that

blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

According to Rom 11:26, there is coming a time when the "fulness of the Gentiles be come in" after which time God will save all Israel corporately and nationally. This is precisely why Israel is "predestined". My Brief Survey of Ephesians has much more detail regarding the direct link between OT prophecies and the predestination of Israel.

*Author's note: Please read (or re-read if necessary) the foundational studies titled, "A Practical Look at the Law" and "A Brief Survey of Ephesians" for a detailed discourse regarding this important topic.*

Luk 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Luk 7:29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with **the baptism of John.**

Luk 7:30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

We see in these two verses that God was "justified" when the people, including the publicans, were baptized with John's baptism. Just a quick reminder; what was John's baptism?

Mar 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

To whom was John preaching? Who was God

# The Evolution of Baptism

asking to repent? Who's sins were to be remitted through John's baptism?

Luk 1:76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

Luk 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

John was preaching to God's people Israel with the hopes that the children of Israel would repent of their long and abundant history of sinning against God's law and persecuting God's prophets. God's ultimate purpose for John's baptism was to remit Israel's sins.

In contrast, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected God's counsel by refusing John's baptism. Notice how the Holy Spirit records this judgement. "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves" God's counsel was a rebuke to the Pharisees doctrine and their religious practices; it was against themselves.

Now we'll compare what Peter preaches in Acts 2 after the resurrection.

We need to carefully analyze every Bible passage regarding baptism to fully understand God's message to his children and we definitely need to look closer at what Mat. 3 is actually proclaiming. We've just learned that there are three distinct baptisms identified in Mat. 3:11 and each one has a unique purpose and the ultimate results vary significantly. John preached a WATER baptism with the distinct purpose of leading Israel to repentance resulting in the remission of their sins. Jesus, on the hand, baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Those baptized with the Holy Ghost were gathered into the garner while those baptized with fire were burned up with the chaff by an unquenchable fire. Two verses, three distinctly different

baptisms administered by three distinctly different mediums and resulting in three distinctly different conclusions. Before we jump over to Acts chapter 2, let's take a quick look at the 5 verses that follow Mat. 3:11 and 12

Mat 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

Mat 3:14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

Mat 3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

Mat 3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

Mat 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Here we find Jesus explaining to John why it was necessary for Jesus to be baptized. Jesus proclaims that he must be baptized "to fulfill all righteousness". I find that rather curious; John's baptism was exclusively for the children of Israel in order to drive them to repentance resulting in their sins be remitted. Why would a sinless Saviour, having never broken any of God's commandments, need to be baptized by John with a baptism of repentance?

While Jesus was undoubtedly the son of God as the voice from heaven confirmed, we must never lose sight of the fact that he was also the son of man. As the son of man he was born from the lineage of King David and therefore Jesus Christ represented the entire nation of Israel. To put it succinctly, Jesus

# The Evolution of Baptism

was one of them and he therefore could not command the children of Israel to be baptized of John without himself being baptized also.

We've finally come to the point where we can move forward through the book of Acts and finally into the Pauline epistles to compare all the occurrences of baptism. Let's begin by reading Act 2:38.

Act 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Act 2:37 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?

Act 2:38 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.

Act 2:39 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.

John's baptism was "with water unto repentance"; Peter is preaching a baptism in the name of Jesus Christ FOR the remission of sins AND to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. This baptism is far different than the simple water baptism of repentance John was preaching because Peter adds the promise to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. If you'll recall, John made a clear distinction between his water baptism and the Holy Ghost baptism performed by Jesus Christ. Why the difference here in the book of Acts? The reason John couldn't make a promise regarding the Holy Ghost is because the disciples first received the Holy Ghost after John's death (Mat. 14, Mark 6) and more importantly, following the

resurrection of Jesus.

Joh\_7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The Holy Ghost was still future in Jn 7.

Joh\_20:22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

Jesus was resurrected by Jn. 20:1; therefore, Peter can promise the Holy Ghost in Acts 2:38.

Notice the succession that Peter lays out here in Acts 2:38.

Repent: Repent is a very interesting word. It simply means to acknowledge that you've done wrong and to turn from that kind of behavior. Now, what specifically is Peter referencing in Acts 2:38? Well, if we review the previous verses in this chapter we learn that Peter is very explicitly referring to how the God's people Israel just crucified their Messiah.

Act 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

Act 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Act 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

So, based on Peter's sermon, was Peter talking to everyone in the whole world? Was he talking to everyone in the whole world for

# The Evolution of Baptism

all ages to come? No; Peter sermon was directed exclusively to the “men of Israel” and in particular it was only to those that had, “taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” Jesus of Nazareth. That’s it. Peter’s sermon was to one group of people (Israel) and only those Jews that were part of the plot to kill Jesus. It was a unique sermon delivered to a specific people group and the call to repentance was only directed toward that audience who was listening to Peter on Pentecost. Therefore, based on the evidence presented, the baptism of Acts 2:38 is no longer valid since all the people directly responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus are long dead.

BTW, who exactly was Peter preaching to on that glorious day of Pentecost? The Holy Spirit didn’t neglect that important detail.

Act 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Act 2:6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

Act 2:7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

Act 2:8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Act 2:9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

Act 2:10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

Act 2:11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful

works of God.

Yep, makes sense. Peter’s audience was exclusively Jews and Jewish proselytes who came together representing many various people groups. This assuredly adds credence to the fact that Acts 2:38 is for no other people group than Jews that were alive during the crucifixion.

Author’s Observation: Notice how the thousands of people responded when directly confronted with the part they (corporatively) played in the senseless and cruel murder of their God approved Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Bible doesn’t record anyone saying, “It wasn’t us, it was the Romans! They are to blame”. No one here is trying to play the victim and pass the buck. Quite a contrast to today’s ubiquitous victim mentality where it’s always someone else’s fault for why “I am who am”.

Let’s revisit Acts 2:38 one more time.

Act 2:38 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.

Notice that Peter ascribes repentance in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, plural. So, while the crowd was encouraged to repent specifically of the crucifixion of Jesus, Peter was speaking an overall general remission for all sins not just the crucifixion.

I’m convinced, that according to Peter’s message, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost was inextricably contingent upon first repentance and then water baptism. That’s correct folks; Peter’s crowd needed to repent and be baptized in order to receive the Holy Ghost. Misunderstanding Acts chapter 2, and misapplying the entire book of Acts, has

# The Evolution of Baptism

caused immeasurable damage to the body of Christ up to and including the persecution and death of true believers by militant “so called” Christian groups.

Excellent book!! “The Reformers and Their Stepchildren (Dissent and Nonconformity)” Paperback – August 1, 2001 by Leonard Verduin (Author)

**Information Interlude:** I hope the reader understands that just because the Bible says something in one book does not necessarily mean that God won’t change His modus operandi in succeeding chapters of the same book. We have learned so far that Mat. 3 identifies three distinctly different baptisms and now we see that the baptism preached by Peter in Acts 2:38 is unique in its own way and quite different than the first three baptisms. We now have 4 noticeably different baptisms each with its particular purpose. As we transition through the book of Acts we are going to identify several more “anomalous” baptisms recorded in scripture and we’ll be able chart the evolution of the act of baptism throughout the NT.

**Back to the Study:** Very few people recognize that Jesus was actually baptized twice. Everyone remembers that Jesus was baptized in water by John the Baptist (Mat. 3) “to fulfill all righteousness” but only the astute Bible student knows about the second and more important baptism Jesus experienced. Undoubtedly, you’ve read the verse many times but it’s never hit home strong enough for you to ask, What? That’s the way it is with many important biblical doctrines; they are hidden right there in plain sight.

Jesus mentions this second baptism in Lk 12. There he talks about a future baptism that greatly concerns (straightens) him. I call it a “Baptism of suffering” but that is purely

speculation since the scriptures do not actually define it.

Luk 12:49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?

Luk 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! (*future*)

**Luk 12:51** Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

Luk 12:52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

Luk 12:53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

Jesus earthly ministry began in Mat. 3 and Mark 1 when John the Baptist baptized Jesus in water. His ministry is well underway in Lk. 12 and now Jesus foretells of a future baptism that he must endure. This future baptism is drastically different than the water baptism of John and Jesus is seriously concerned about it. I suspect the reader is rather surprised to learn this new evidence and likely wondering right now what this second baptism could be?

Mat 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. (*future*)

Mat 20:23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father. (*future*)



# The Evolution of Baptism

Another recording of the same discourse.

Mar 10:38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

Mar 10:39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:(future)

Hmm...Jesus mentions "drink of the cup I drink of" in direct relation with the future baptism he is awaiting. What if the future baptism was directly associated with Jesus death?

Rom 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

This is yet another type of baptism and there's not a drop of water to be found. We will cover Rom 6 in great detail later in this study. For now, let's move on to another occurrence of baptism in the book of Acts. We have just learned that Jesus was baptized twice and that brings the total number of distinctly different baptisms to five. In fact, Jesus confirms that his disciples, at least the ones talking to him in these passages, will also be baptized with that same baptism, whatever it was.

As aforementioned, the baptism in Acts 2:38 appears similar to John's baptism except that Peter promised the participants they would receive the Holy Ghost following baptism and the Holy Ghost is referred to as a "gift". In sharp contrast, John was clear that his water baptism was completely unique from the Holy Ghost baptism offered by Jesus. That said, I see people getting baptized in Acts 2 but the Bible does not record anyone (other than the

apostles Acts 2:4) evidentially receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. Was the promise contingent upon "every one of you (them)" repenting and getting baptized for the remission of sin? In other words, Was it all or nothing? Either everyone repented and received or no one received?

Act 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

I'm certainly not implying that those baptized absolutely did not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost but the Bible doesn't expressly say they did. As I understand John's water baptism, it was incumbent upon the entire nation of Israel repenting followed by being baptized in order for the entire nation of Israel to receive the remission of sins. I suspect the same offer is being made in Acts 2. That's why Peter says, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins". While I can't be certain about that last point I just made, I CAN be certain that the remission of sins was inextricably tied to repenting and being baptized. Read the verse again; that's exactly what it says. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins

**FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS!** That's exactly what the verse says. God said it and therefore He meant it! And I believe it, regardless of what all the religious doctrines proclaim.

Peter's audience, all Jews or Jewish proselytes by the way, needed to repent and be baptized FOR (in order to receive) the remission of sins. I believe that's quite clear. These verses are exactly what the Church of Christ uses to justify their dogmas and

# The Evolution of Baptism

doctrine. All the various religious doctrines and biblical misunderstandings surrounding baptism have their cherry picked verses to prove their point. Let's continue with the study.

Another unique baptism (we are up to number 6) is described in Acts 8:4-8.

Do you recognize any distinct differences in this act of baptism? First we need to identify the Samaritans as half breed Jews who are despised and hated by any self-respecting full blooded Jew.

Act 8:4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

Act 8:5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

Act 8:6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

Act 8:7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

Act 8:8 And there was great joy in that city.

Remember, Samaritans are half breed Jews and, since Jews require a sign (1Cor 1:22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom), we see God giving the Samaritans signs and wonders in vs. 6 and 7.

Notice the message Phillip delivered in vs. 12 and the immediate response of the Samaritans.

**Act 8:12** But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Notice that the message Phillip preaches to

the Samaritans is distinctly different than the message Peter preached to the full-blooded Jews in Acts 2. It's critical to note that Phillip said nothing to the Samaritans about repentance as a prerequisite to receiving the act of baptism. Phillip's only message was "believe". In addition, notice which kingdom Philip is preaching; it's the kingdom of God rather than the Jewish kingdom of heaven. This is very important since God is a spirit and the kingdom of God is within you. This is an enormous departure from the first 5 we've identified so I'm labeling this baptism number 6.

This is where the story takes an amazing twist of events. The Samaritan hear the word of God, by faith receive and believe the word of God, and then just to prove their conversion was real they submit themselves to baptism. From an evangelical Christian standpoint, the biblical account of the Samaritans sounds like the perfect "glory story" testimony for Phillip to boast about during the next Wednesday night service.

However, not so fast! This glory story is about to turned upside down on its head. We are about to encounter a religious white water rapids, danger class 4! Let's take a look at what happened to those unsuspecting and sincerely believing people of Samaria.

As previously mentioned, Phillip mentions nothing about repentance in his message to the Samaritans. That's a big departure from both Peter and John the Baptist. Next, we see AFTER the Samaritans had hear the word of God, received the word of God, they had all been baptized, and finally the apostles get wind of the Samaritan's conversion. Hardly believing what they were hearing they immediately send John and Peter to investigate the situation. What they discover was quite alarming because something was

# The Evolution of Baptism

drastically wrong.

Act 8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

**Act 8:15** Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

Act 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Act 8:17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

I sure trust that my readers can see some HUGE differentiators with this new twist of a baptismal experience. I'm still trying to understand how Peter and John KNEW that the Samaritans didn't receive the Holy Ghost. It appears from the reading that the disciple recognized the situation immediately and they exhibit no sense of shock or surprise that Samaritans were still awaiting the arrival and indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost.

**Act 8:15** Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

Act 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Now comes the most challenging aspect of this account for me to embrace.

Act 8:17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

This event presents a rather sticky wicket. The Samaritans had heard the word of God (Acts 8:6) while seeing many signs and wonders (Acts 8:6,7), and ultimately "believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ" which

resulted in both men and women being baptized. Nothing "sticky" about that yet; in fact that's the dream of every evangelical Christian.

The "sticky wicket" is recorded in vs. 14 and following. While it's true the Samaritans had receive the word of God AND believed the word of God, they had not yet received the Holy Ghost. Now that's interesting. Why would this happen; how can that be?

While I don't want to go into too much detail, it's important that we understand some background history of the relationship between the children of Israel and the Samaritan's.

First, we need to know that the Samaritans were part of the northern tribes of Israel and they were conquered by the King of Assyria.

**2Ki 17:5** Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

**2Ki 17:6** In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

**2Ki 17:24** And the king of Assyria brought *men* from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

**2Ki 17:28** Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

**2Ki 17:41** So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did

# The Evolution of Baptism

their fathers, so do they unto this day.

I recommend the reader read the entire 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of 2 Kings to get a better understanding of the plight of the northern 10 tribes of Israel, including Samaria. Suffice it to mention that the northern 10 tribes of Israel did not join the southern two tribes of Judah when Artaxerxes the king of Babylon sent Nehemiah and a remnant of the Jewish people back to Jerusalem to rebuilt its walls and gates.

The Samaritans never again adopted the temple in Jerusalem as their center of worship. Instead they were fanatically attached to Mount Gerizem as their place of worship. We find a brief account in the book of John that supports this.

John 4:7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

John 4:9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

John 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

John 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

John 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

John 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

In John 4, Jesus delivers a message to the Samaritan woman that truly couldn't have been any more simple and explicit.

John 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

Notice that in vs. 22 Jesus uses no uncertain terms and his message is explicitly clear that Samaritan "salvation is of the Jews".

This was a religious rebuke to the half breed Jew that had been taught all her life that the Jewish religion was wrong, the temple in Jerusalem is NOT the correct place to worship God but rather Mt. Gerizim is were true Samaritan believers worship their God. In one simple sentence, Jesus rebuffs one of the major underpinnings of the Samaritan's national religious traditions. It's a little like addressing an Italian Catholic and abruptly saying, "Mary was a sinner but Jesus is the Saviour". It's probably not going to go over very well.

God wants this Samaritan woman, along with all other Samaritans, to know unequivocally that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and, by the way, he's' Jewish.

This is a rather interesting discourse between Jesus and a woman of Samaria. The woman, seemingly feeling guilty or uneasy, voluntarily acknowledges the wide chasm between the Jewish religious practices and that of the Samaritans. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus is about to give this Samaritan one of his famous "outside the box" religious lessons that introduces a significant departure from

# The Evolution of Baptism

both Jewish and Samaritan traditions. “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.”

The Jewish people looked down on Samaritans and had little to do with them for several reasons: their mixed-ethnicity, their ignorance and disregard of the ways of God, and their worship of God on Mount Gerizim instead of at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Side Note: Neh 4:1 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

Neh 4:2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

As you’ll recall, Sanballat and the Samaritans did everything in their power to halt Nehemiah from rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. We can see that the Samaritans and the remnant of Israel that returned to the land had a rich history of deep antagonism and vitriolic hatred for each other.

Now that we’ve set the groundwork to understand a little about the dynamic between Israel and the Samaritans, lets take a closer look at Acts 8.

Notice that Peter and John were sent specifically from Jerusalem to the Samaritans confirming that Jerusalem was the center of true salvation and not Mount Gerizim. Notice also that God required the Jewish apostles lay hands on their long-lost half-breed brethren for them to receive the Holy Ghost further

emphasizing to the Samaritans that they have been wrong in their religious practices for all those years of rebellion against God and his people. This was a tough somewhat humiliating lesson but extremely pragmatic. If the Jews had to repent of breaking God’s law for 1500, then the Samaritans needed to acknowledge the fact that their people had been spiritually wrong for hundreds of years.

One little side note. Let’s compare these passages. “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Notice how we have Philip preaching the kingdom of God, who is a spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and truth. Then, to complete the instruction, Jesus is telling the Samaritan woman that the day approaches when she and her people will neither worship in Jerusalem nor on Mt. Garizim. Once again we encounter a revolutionary idea changing the long historically held and firmly entrenched religious traditions of men and in particular the children of Israel.

Knowing Peter’s temperament recorded in Acts 10, I find it quite surprising that of all the men the apostles could have sent to perform the task, Peter was chosen to preach to the half breed Samaritans. Poetic justice? Maybe God was using the Samaritan situation to help prepare Peter for the upcoming Gentile evangelistic outreach in Acts 10. God certainly has a sense of humor. One more consideration is the fact that the Samaritans have some Jewish blood and therefore, Peter

# The Evolution of Baptism

being the apostle to the circumcision (Jews), it does make sense that this would be Peter's responsibility.

Now, back to Acts 8. We can begin to see the salvation movement migrating slowly outward away from the epicenter of Jerusalem. We established that John's baptism was exclusively for the nation of Israel and we also saw that Peter was preaching exclusively to Jews and Jewish proselytes in Acts 2.

Act 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

However, in the early verses of Acts 8 we see the gospel message moving from Jerusalem into Samaria. That's exactly what we should expect based on Jesus final message to his disciples.

Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Notice the progression; Jerusalem first, all Judea second, Samaria third, and the Gentiles last. In Acts 8 the salvation of the Samaritans proves we've reached stage three and we are quickly progressing toward the final stage. As a Gentile, I'm getting excited!

In the later portion of that same chapter we find another unique baptism. This time it involves Phillip once again but this time he's preaching to an Ethiopian eunuch. This Ethiopian is a worshipper of the God of Israel but he's most likely a Gentile proselyte to the Jewish religion; therefore, I sincerely doubt that he's an Abrahamic Jew but he's not exactly what I'd classify as a Gentile because of his alliance with the

Jewish faith. He's actually kind of a "tweener".

Act 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

Act 8:27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

Notice that Phillip preaches unto him Jesus; however, once again no repentance is mentioned nor suggested. Also notice that receiving the Holy Ghost after baptism is not mentioned here.

Act 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

Act 8:36 And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is water*; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

Act 8:37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Act 8:38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

This account of salvation and baptism in the later portion of Acts 8 is probably the all-time favorite example used by evangelical Christians. It provides that neat and clean presentation that makes it easy for the masses to understand and believe. Careful observation of the biblical record leads us to believe that this baptism is unique to the previous 6 baptisms we've studied. It's certainly different

# The Evolution of Baptism

than John's baptism, which was virtually identical to the baptism preached by Peter in Acts 2 since both of those accounts required prior repentance and the coveted remission of sin was inextricably tied to the baptismal event. There is no laying on of hands as was mentioned previously in this chapter with the Samaritans so this account fits the bill for the vast majority of Baptist and most non-denominational evangelical Christian churches. It's used extensively and it's easy to see why. Salvation is simply believing God's promises, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

In Acts 9 we encounter a really bad guy named Saul who has a salvation experience like none other and his baptismal incident is likewise unique to all the previous baptisms. I trust the reader is gaining more confidence to acknowledge the pattern of uniqueness in the various baptisms recorded in scripture.

Acts 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

We've already briefly encountered this same Saul in Acts 7. The people who witnessed the stoning of Stephen laid their garments at the feet of Saul. Now in Acts 9 we find Saul seeking a letter from the high priest so he can hunt up Christians, men and women, in Damascus and bring them bound to Jerusalem. Saul wanted to arrest the Christian movement immediately to triage the damaging results and prevent any further spreading of the perceived lies. Suffice it to say that Saul had plenty of Christian "blood on his hands" at this time.

You probably recall that Saul was nearing Damascus when the Lord Jesus himself appeared to him and Saul fell to the earth in fear. The Lord sent Saul to a disciple in

Damascus named Ananias who had heard all about the terror of this Saul of Tarsus. Fortunately for all of us Gentiles, Ananias trusts the assurances offered by the Lord, Ananias finds Saul and instructs him what he must do, and Saul of Tarsus is gloriously and miraculously converted to the inexorable Christian witness named Paul that we all love and admire.

The problem we have is that Paul's baptism is once again "messy", not at all like the simple testimony provided for us in the later portion of Acts 8.

Act 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

NOTE: Notice the progression in vs. 15. I believe Paul often got this backwards because he ALWAYS had a propensity to seek out the Jews and the Jewish synagogues. One thing you knew about Paul was that he was habitually found in the local synagogue on the Sabbath.

Act 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Act 9:17 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.**

Act 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Do you see how this gets messy real fast? I know, I'm a broken record, but surely the reader can see that this is a very unique baptism.

# The Evolution of Baptism

Here's what we know. Saul was a Jew; in fact he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews!

Php 3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

Php 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

Php 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Paul has quite a pedigree. However, in spite of the fact that he was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" and "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (now THAT's as bold as statement as I've ever seen!), Paul was also a Roman citizen and that makes him quite unique.

I borrowed the following from the internet because it was well written and informative.

Paul was a Roman citizen by birth, and Tarsus, where Paul was born, was a free city (see Acts 21:39). The Emperor Pompey made Cilicia a Roman province in 64 BC, and its capital, Tarsus, was a free city from the time of Augustus. Although it is unknown exactly how his parents became citizens of Rome, Paul was a Roman citizen by birth, which was a privilege many did not have. Some could buy Roman citizenship, but it was pricey (see Acts 22:28). The privileges of citizenship explain how Paul escaped flogging in Acts 22:25–27 and was able to appeal for a hearing before Emperor Nero in Acts 25:10–11.

God used Paul's background for His glory, and Paul testified that "God . . . set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his

grace" (Galatians 1:15). With his Jewish upbringing and knowledge of Greek culture and philosophy from his time in Tarsus, Paul was prepared for ministry to both Jews and Gentiles throughout the Roman world. Paul's status as a Roman citizen by birth benefited him greatly as he traveled on his missionary journeys to fulfill Jesus' words that he would be a "chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Paul-Roman-citizen.html>)

Paul was not your typical zealous Jew. He was born a Roman citizen and therefore had the right of free travel throughout the Roman empire. In addition to that, his father was a Pharisee and Paul followed in his father's footsteps.

Act 23:6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

Act 26:4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

Act 26:5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

Here's another important clue to understanding each one of these anomalous baptismal events. It's vital that we investigate the person, or persons, being baptized in order to fully understand the underlying reason as to the modus operandi of the baptismal administration.

John the Baptist and Peter in Acts 2 were baptizing Jews. Early in Acts 8 Philip is



# The Evolution of Baptism

baptizing Samaritans while later in the chapter this same Phillip is baptizing an Ethiopian eunuch. We see in the same chapter along with the very same preacher two different administrations along with two different results. I'm seeing a distinct pattern form where each recorded baptism is uniquely fashioned to fit the particular baptismal candidate and their life situation.

This is nowhere truer than in the Saul to Paul conversion experience.

Joh\_9:39 And Jesus said, **For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.**

I find it instructive that God uses blindness to help Paul see. I believe it's safe to assume that in a way the Lord judged Paul on the road to Damascus.

Isa\_29:18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

Isa\_42:18 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.

In Acts 9:18 we see that, just as Ananias promised, the scales immediately fell from Paul's eyes and he was subsequently baptized. Ananias also promised that Paul would be filled with the Holy Ghost but the Bible doesn't record a demonstrative apparition similar to Acts 10 and Acts 19; however, we can see from Paul's epistles that he was certainly filled with the Holy Ghost from that time forward.

This record of the baptism in Acts 9 included lots of messy details.

1. Saul sees a physical or spiritual apparition of the Lord Jesus as he's traveling to Damascus (not sure which). Not many

Christian converts can top nor match that little event.

2. The encounter with the Lord causes blindness in Saul. Immediate blindness never been a part of any "glory story" I've ever heard.
3. Saul refuses to eat or drink for 3 solid days.
4. The Lord then appears to Ananias and sends Ananias to Saul with the following message. "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".
5. Once again we have the laying on of hands by Ananias.
6. The scales fall off Saul's eyes and he then receives baptism.

How can someone preach as a normal occurrence the type of sensationalism found in Acts 9? This ranks right up there with the spiritual laughing gas and uncontrollable rolling in the aisles that occur in some churches. Just imagine a pastor instructing a congregation that points 1-6 shown above are absolutely necessary as a manifestation to prove personal salvation and subsequent baptism. We laugh at the idea and yet it's actually not as humorous as the reader might think. Many emotionally held religious dogmas are spawned from obscure passages such as Acts 9.

The big difference in Acts 9 is that this is God's Holy Bible and certainly nothing to laugh at. All the variations in baptism confirm, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the Bible does not present ONE and ONLY ONE recipe for salvation. The Bible truths about trusting Christ never change, but life experience and the working of the Holy Spirit can differ

# The Evolution of Baptism

significantly from one person to the next. Remember, God is wild and He doeth wild acts; no man or religious organization can tame Him. We simply need to unleash Him from our religiously programmed prison we've created for him.

Fair warning! It's time to tighten your seatbelt because we are moving into troubled waters. The salvific efficacy of Christianity is about to take a major turn for the better in Acts chapter 10.

Act 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

Act 10:2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

Just to set the stage briefly, Peter makes it crystal clear that Cornelius is a Gentile, a centurion of the Italian band (vss. 28 and 45). The Holy Spirit also wants us to know that Cornelius, and his household, feared God. In fact, Cornelius was known as quite a prayer warrior. However, it appears to me that Cornelius suspected he was missing an important element in his worship of God. All I really know for sure is that the angel of God confirms to Cornelius that his prayers were heard and God was about to answer them.

At this point Cornelius sends two messengers who bid Peter to return with them as bidden by their master. These messengers give a sterling testimony of Cornelius character and generosity, especially when it came to the Jewish people.

Prior to the arrival of the messengers, Peter gets a one on one tutorial from the Lord himself regarding a HUGE paradigm shift in Jewish tradition and a shocking realization of the new ethnic equality.

Act 10:15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

This is the inception of Gentile salvation. Up to this juncture, we've seen the gospel spread from Jerusalem, to all Judea, then to Samaria, and now it's fanning out the uttermost parts of the world. The gospel EXPLOSION has just been released.

This is a very unique opportunity for Peter and as with all the other baptisms we will discover some significant anomalies in Acts 10.

We know Cornelius was a devout man who feared God, both he and his household. That sounds great. Sign him up! Well, not so fast.

While all that was true about Cornelius, the Holy Spirit records that he still had some squirrely doctrine that needed to be corrected. Remember, Cornelius is Italian.

Act 10:25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

Act 10:26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

Cornelius represents to me the average church attending Christian. Many of them are devout and certainly do fear God; however, humans have a deeply ingrained propensity to worship men; some are God's messenger but many are not. These messengers can hold a variety of different offices but some of the most common are pastors, associate pastors, elders, denominational officers, priests, radio preachers, Bible scholars and professors, deacons, deaconesses, charismatic religious celebrities such as speakers / musicians / actors, and I'll complete the list with father / mother. There are many more but that provides a good example. The most egregious aspect for me is the indoctrination

# The Evolution of Baptism

disseminated by pastors and church leaders that causes Christians to think religious leaders act in some way as intermediaries between us and God. That was old testament! The New Testament is quite clear:

1Ti\_2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Cornelius was a wonderful person; he just needed some additional instruction which Peter provides in vs. 26.

Peter, still trying to come to grips with the new paradigm shift embracing Gentiles, feels compelled to explain to Cornelius why he feels the liberty to keep company with Cornelius and his household. This is Peter's pride oozing out all over the place.

Act 10:28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

That, folks, is not a good way to engage in an evangelistic conversation. "Well sir, as you know I don't typically keep company with anyone foolish enough to be a Trump supporter, but God showed me that I shouldn't call even Trump advocates common or unclean", Out in my neck of the woods, I suspect you might get thrown off this gentleman's property, and for good reason I must add. BTW, I'm not a Chump supporter; I'm an equal opportunity hater!

So now that Peter has corrected Cornelius' bad doctrine and made Cornelius, as well as his entire household, feel like second class citizens, Peter is ready to share the good news of the gospel. Ya gotta hand it to Peter; he was quite familiar with the taste of shoe

leather. In fact, Paul sharply rebukes Peter in Gal. 2 for a similar incident.

Peter reiterates the lesson learned just in case someone missed it the first two times.

Act 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

Act 10:35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Finally, Peter and everyone for generations to come have a vivid record in the Bible that God is no respecter of persons and the Gentiles are, as of Acts 10, fully embraced into God's salvation plan. I truly can't overemphasize the immensity of this new development. For the first time in recorded biblical history, the Gentiles have the opportunity to be an integral part of God plan for the ages. This is "joy unspeakable and full of glory" as the hymn proclaims.!

The message Peter preaches to these Gentiles is significantly different than the one he preached to the Jews in Acts 2 and in fact it's different than any of the messages Peter has delivered heretofore. Why, you might ask? Because the bible has recorded Peter preaching to Gentiles heretofore so we shouldn't be surprised that he changes his message based on the audience. Seasoned preachers do the same thing. Let's take a closer look at what Peter actually said to Cornelius and his household.

Act 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

Act 10:37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

# The Evolution of Baptism

Act 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Act 10:39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

Act 10:40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

Act 10:41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

Act 10:42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

Act 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

NOTE: Wow!! Did you catch that? This is Peter, Acts 2:38 Peter.

Do you recall the message Peter preached to the Jewish nation in Acts 2 before the stoning of Stephen?

Act 2:38 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.

The message in Acts 10 is quite a departure from the one in Acts 2. Peter mentions nothing about repentance and nothing about baptism until AFTER his audience receives the Holy Ghost. In Acts 2, Peter makes it clear that hearers needed to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for (i.e.

in order to receive) the remission of sins AND THEN they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. In Acts 10 Peter makes it clear to the Gentile audience that whosoever (I love that “free will” word!) believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

Salvation just became much more simple!

Rom 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Rom 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

That right there removes any notion of some sort of “prerequisite” prior to salvation. Simply believe and therefore receive the gift of God.

Act 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Here's an interesting twist to baptism. The Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word, The verse doesn't even claim they believed, although we can certainly assume they did believe in Jesus.

Notice the order has suddenly switched; the audience, including Cornelius, heard the word and subsequently the Holy Ghost fell on all of them that heard while Peter was still speaking. This demonstrative manifestation of the Holy Ghost surprisingly precedes their baptism and repentance is completely out of the picture, never mentioned once. I only say surprisingly because the Samaritans apparently received the word gladly from Phillip and were therefore baptized by Phillip; however, the Samaritans didn't receive the Holy Ghost until Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem and laid their

# The Evolution of Baptism

hands on them. Things different are never the same!

Cornelius and his household represent the first truly Gentiles converted in the book of Acts. Also note that “they of the circumcision...were astonished...because on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost”. Tongues, sign, Jews.

Act 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Act 10:45 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**.

Act 10:46 For **they heard them speak with tongues**, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

This manifestation of the gift of the tongues was a sign to the contingency of the circumcision (Ch. 11:12, Jews) that traveled with Peter. Please always remember that the purpose of tongues is for a sign to the unbelieving Jew. (I Cor 14:22; I Cor 1:22) The gift of tongues is a real spiritual gift that has a distinct purpose. Some will say, But it was the Gentiles that received the gift not the Jews. And I say, Correct!! But the sign was given to confirm to the Jews that the door of salvation was now freely open to the Gentiles. As you can see from the text, Peter was the one who most desperately needed that type of confirmation because he was obviously doubting and uncomfortable with the entire event.

Act 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

NOTE: Once again Peter reveals his lack of

confidence regarding his reputation among the Jewish community. Why else would he ask such a question. Notice also that the big little word “we” is a discriminatory phrase distinguishing the circumcision (Jews, including Peter) from the Gentiles who just received the Holy Ghost.

Act 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Just to be fair to Peter, and so my readers don't think I'm always down upon Peter, he is going to take some heat in the very next chapter regarding this new development.

Act 11:1 And the **apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God**.

Act 11:2 And **when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him**,

Act 11:3 Saying, **Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them**.

Forget about the hugely successful evangelistic outreach that Peter just experienced among a previously unreached people group. That's completely insignificant and irrelevant compared to the loathsome fact that Peter had the audacity to eat with some of those Gentile dogs! Yep, that the Jews for ya.

This next occurrence of the word baptism is actually Peter recounting his Acts 10 experience to the Jews in Jerusalem. Peter is doing his best to justify his behavior among the Gentiles so his kinsmen according to the flesh will once again accept him into their good graces. I find it rather instructive how Peter couches his experience with Cornelius and his household.

Act 11:12 And **the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting**. Moreover these six

# The Evolution of Baptism

brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

NOTE: That's a little like a 8 yr. old explaining why he went to the park without permission and how his three friends went with him. Humorous.

Act 11:13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

Act 11:14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

Act 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

Act 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Act 11:17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

What did Peter leave out? He never mentions that he baptized Cornelius and his household AFTER they received the Holy Ghost.

Hmmm? Apparently, baptism has diminished in importance such that Peter doesn't even think to mention it. Interesting turn of events if I do say so myself. In Acts 2 Peter makes it abundantly clear to the exclusively Jewish audience assembled for the celebration of Pentecost that water baptism is a prerequisite to receiving the Holy Ghost.

Act 2:38 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.

As the title of this study suggests, the purpose and administration of baptism is evolving as

time moves along through the book of Acts.

Here's a similar baptism with a slight variation.

**Act 19:1** 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,

Act 19:2 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.

Act 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

Act 19:4 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.

Act 19:5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Act 19:6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Informational Interlude: The title of this little Bible study is, "The Evolution of Baptism". It was the best title I could find based on what I'm seeing in scripture. I trust the reader is coming to recognize, not only the transformation of the administration of baptism as we move through the NT, but also the anomalies that occur such as the unique Samaritan baptism recorded in Acts 8. Philip baptized the crowd but the Samaritans don't receive the Holy Ghost until after Peter and John arrive from Jerusalem and lay their hands on the people. In addition, Acts 19 makes it intuitively obvious that John's water baptism was woefully insufficient and completely inappropriate at that time. Why you may ask? Well, for one reason, John's

# The Evolution of Baptism

baptism was exclusively for the children of Israel. However, while I can't prove one way or the other, I do suspect the disciples in Acts 19 that Paul re-baptizes are actually Jews. Here's why.

Act 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Act 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, **he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John**.

Act 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

Act 18:27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

Act 18:28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Act 19:1 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,

NOTE: It certainly makes sense that these disciples would have been converts that Apollos made during his tour of duty in Ephesus.

Act 19:2 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.

Act 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto

John's baptism.

Act 19:4 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.

Paul repeats what we already know; John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance. By Acts chapter 8 we see that John's baptism was no longer valid; however, Peter was still preaching John's baptism of repentance in Acts chapter 2. This is quite the conundrum! What happened between Acts 2 and Acts 8 to void the efficacy of John's baptism of repentance? I trust the reader can easily recognize by this stage of our study that the act of baptism has evolved significantly even within these few chapters of Acts.

Allow me to present what I believe happened to nullify John's baptism of repentance. We need to look back at Acts chapter 7 and the stoning of Stephen. In fact, let's begin our investigation in Acts chapter 6.

Act 6:8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Act 6:9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

Act 6:10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

Stephen was full of faith and power and the religious crowd could not successfully refute his God inspired wisdom; therefore, they resorted to the one tactic Satan's disciples always use, Character Assassination! If you can't defeat the message, utterly destroy the

# The Evolution of Baptism

messenger!

Stephen delivers one of the most powerful sermons recorded in scripture in Acts 7. I recommend you read the entire sermon on your own. What follows is the result of his sermon.

Act 7:54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

Act 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

NOTE: This is a critical turning point in the NT. Up until this point the kingdom of heaven was available to the Jews for the taking. They simply needed to recognize the colossal mistake they'd made as a nation, as well as the entire Jewish race, when they foolishly crucified their long awaited Messiah. The children of Israel needed to repent of their sin, receive / embrace the Lord Jesus Christ corporately as a nation, and enter into the joy of Lord. This obviously didn't happen.

Notice that Stephen saw Jesus STANDING on the right hand of God. Hmm, I thought, according the Apostles Creed, Jesus SITTETH on the right hand of God. Well,

Psa\_110:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

1Ki\_22:19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

I believe that Jesus is indeed sitting on the right hand of God awaiting his second coming when his enemies will be utterly and ruthlessly destroyed. Amen and Amen!! So

why then was he standing when Stephen saw him in heaven? Isaiah chapter 3 can shed a little light on this event.

Isa\_3:13 The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.

The Lord STANDETH to JUDGE the people and Stephen looked up into heaven and saw Jesus standing. Hmm, that's quite interesting! The Jews had rejected John the Baptist who WOULD HAVE BEEN Elijah had they received him. (Mat. 17:11,12) The Jews rejected their Messiah and therefore, by default, they also rejected the kingdom of heaven while Jesus dwelt on earth during his first advent. Now, in Acts 7, Jesus is standing in heaven ready to judge the people but the Jews kill God's messenger. I believe this was the final straw regarding John's baptism of repentance.

The dynamic landscape of the Christian movement changes dramatically after the stoning of Stephen. This is when salvation moves into the final phase of stage 4 and broadens its outreach unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

In Acts 8 we see Phillip preaching to an Ethiopian eunuch who happens to be a Jewish proselyte, Acts 9 the apostle to the Gentiles (Paul) is miraculously converted while on his way to Damascus, in Acts 10 Peter is shocked, flabbergasted by the sheet vision and the idea that Gentiles could be part of God's future plans, and we witness the first recorded conversion of a true Gentile. We'll study these events in much greater detail but I'm simply trying to explain WHY we are



# The Evolution of Baptism

seeing the act of baptism evolve before our very eyes.

It wasn't good enough for God to simply see future events and know assuredly that the Jews would reject his offer of the kingdom. Because of God's innate sense of justice and prudence, it was critical for God to prove, unequivocally, to the Jews and Gentiles alike, that the Jews would summarily reject his amazing offer before He could expand the target audience for the good news of the gospel to the Gentiles. I believe Stephen's vision proves that Acts 7 was the defining moment and God quickly opened the flood gates to usher all the other nations (Gentiles) into the fold.

Now the astute Bible student will say, Hey, according to Jn 10, that was part of God's plan all along. And I would say, yes, I must agree with you. At least it certainly appears to be true.

Joh\_10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

I'll be honest, I don't see anyway around the NT church age that we are experiencing since Acts chapter 7. There are far too many OT prophecies that could not have been fulfilled without this 2000 yr. church age gap. That said, I believe the Jews were provided the opportunity and the free will to accept or reject the kingdom. God, being sovereign, knew that the stiff necked hard hearted Jewish leaders would strongly influence the poor ignorant sheeple to follow their lead, crucify their Messiah, and ultimately reject the promised Messianic kingdom. Look around people; nothing has changed in 2000 yrs. Corrupt leaders around the world are still hoodwinking sheeple into performing self destructive activities.

Act 7:56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the **Son of man** standing on the right hand of God.

Act 7:57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

Act 7:58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Act 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

Act 7:60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

NOTE: These Jews must have known their scriptures intimately because Stephen's message regarding the Son of man standing on the right hand of God doesn't appear to be seriously egregious UNLESS they knew Isa 3. This final message was more than they could bear. They couldn't refute Stephen's wisdom so they were forced, once again, to destroy God's messenger. This is a familiar pattern with the children of Israel and is certainly one of the primary reasons why God sent John preaching a baptism of repentance to the Jews.

The young man Saul in vs. 58 is none other than our apostle to the Gentiles a.k.a. Paul. It's instructive that God chose Paul to witness this defining moment but from the evil side and with a kindred heart of the Jews persecuting Christian. It's no wonder Paul never fully recovered from his persecution days, along with this event, because he mentions it multiple times in his writings.

The next baptism we'll study is quite simple

# The Evolution of Baptism

and remarkably nondescript.

Act 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Act 16:15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

Wow!! That's what I classify as a "yawner". We have a business woman who lives in Thyatira and she just happens to worship God. She hears Paul, the Lord opens her heart, and according to scripture "she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul". It appears that "attending unto the things which were spoken of Paul" must be Bible code for "belief" and / or "faith". Whatever happened, Lydia's non-descript conversion was enough for Paul to baptize her and her household. Just so ya know, this would not be well accepted during the Wednesday night glory story testimonies in your local Baptist church. The Baptist expect far more detail about someone's salvation story.

The only sticky point I find regarding this exceedingly simple conversion story is the seemingly minor detail that Lydia's household was ALSO baptized with Lydia. This verse has been used by paedo-baptist groups for many years to purportedly prove that the apostle Paul baptized infants. Unfortunately, the paedo-baptist groups overlooked the well known fact that Lydia was a strong geriatric rights advocate and her entire household staff consisted of men and women that had reached non-child bearing years. She had no one under 60 yrs. old in her household.

I trust my readers immediately saw through the satire of my statement regarding everyone in Lydia's household staff being 60+ yrs. old because I have no way of proving that from scripture or any other writings. Similarly, presuming that Lydia had infants in her household and these infants were baptized is equally satirical. Assuming she was a geriatric activist is no more ludicrous than assuming she ran a daycare for infants or children. Infant baptizing advocates will claim, "In that day it was common for extended family members to live together in one household..." That may be, but "common" doesn't mean "always" and we're not even certain Lydia was married; in fact, she invites Paul to "my house" which leads me to believe she wasn't married. My point is simply this; I can't prove either way whether or not Lydia had either infants or children living in her household; therefore, it's a HUGE stretch to use this event as a proof that the disciples baptized infants.

As a matter of fact, it troubles me greatly that Lydia's entire household was baptized. Why? The Bible is clear; Lydia worshipped God, Lydia heard Paul and Silas (*us*), Lydia attended unto the things spoken of Paul. Let's pause for just a moment and carefully consider Lydia's testimony of salvation. The first sign a Baptist looks for in a salvation testimony is sincere heart felt contrition and repentance followed closely by full surrender to the Lord. The Holy Spirit recorded none of that emotional gushy stuff in Lydia's case. She simply hears, attends unto Paul's words, and then was baptized. Put succinctly, Lydia's salvation story would be unconvincing to the Wednesday night crowd at most fundamental Baptist churches. This sure looks to me like the dreaded "easy believism" convert which is the bane of many evangelical Christians.

In Lydia's case, we can assume something

# The Evolution of Baptism

significant happened because Paul decided to baptize her. Maybe she was already “saved” before Paul arrived because the Bible records that she “worshipped God”. What was this POWERFUL salvation message that Paul delivers to Lydia? We can really only speculate because the Holy Spirit chose to not record Paul’s message so we don’t even know what he told Lydia.

Now let’s consider Lydia’s household. Who from her household heard Paul’s message? We don’t know. Was there anyone from Lydia’s household that worshipped God before Paul arrived? We don’t know. Did anyone other than Lydia attend unto the words spoken by Paul? The Bible doesn’t record any of that information. So why does Lydia’s household get baptized? I DON’T KNOW!!

I guess we can assume that everyone in her household attended unto Paul’s message just like Lydia but that’s pure speculation and a huge leap of faith. Christians begin teaching their children about God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all things biblical at a very young age for roughly 14 yrs. to indoctrinate them into the Christian faith and yet many teenagers reject the God of their family. That’s a cold hard fact. Especially those who pursue secondary education in the state run atheistic Uni-Versity where the message of God is verboten. Now we are supposed to believe that Paul provides one message and everyone who hears him comes to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s a stretch for me to fully believe; however, the Bible says they all were baptized for one reason or another.

This next event is quite famous and has been used countless (and I do mean countless) times for evangelistic outreach. Paul preaches to the Philippian jailer, the jailer who is

gloriously converted and then subsequently baptized. This time the Bible records a very clear gospel message, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”.

I find it instructive that God chose not to record the message Paul delivered to Lydia who had a history of being a worshipper of God. Maybe Lydia didn’t need much of an evangelistic message to recognize Christ as Messiah. Was Lydia Jewish? If not, why was she a worshipper of God? The Bible doesn’t expressly identify Lydia as Jewish or Gentile; we only know she lived in Thyatira and sold purple. Purple being the color of royalty.

In contrast, the keeper of the prison was almost assuredly a worshipper of idols and false gods. While I can’t prove that conclusively, I can prove that he was not a disciple of Jesus Christ otherwise he wouldn’t have made the inquiry, “what must I do to be saved?”. The song service Paul and Silas conducted that evening obviously had a significant affect on the jailer.

Act 16:28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

Act 16:29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

Act 16:30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

Act 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Act 16:32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

Act 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

At least this time the Paul’s salvation message

# The Evolution of Baptism

is recorded albeit incredibly simplistic; Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. I find it interesting that in both Lydia and the Philippian jailer conversation message, Paul makes what looks to be a promise regarding the salvation of each of their households. I can't "believe" for my children nor for those in my household and similarly those in my household cannot "believe" for me. I know the head of the household had an enormous influence on those who lived with them but I still don't fully understand that language. Peter makes the same claim in Acts 11:14 about Cornelius' house even though his statement is not confirmed as the Holy Spirit records the event in Acts 10. It's not until Peter rehearses the matter in Acts 11 that we learn about the statement.

Once again, Paul sorely disappoints the Baptist contingency of faithful brethren by neglecting to preach repentance from sin and complete submission to the pastor of the local church. (Whoops, that was my inside voice 😊)

Paul preaches the most simplistic message possible, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved! The underlying and unspoken message is clear to me; water baptism is NOT necessary at this time and is never REQUIRED for Gentiles. And, based on this revelation, I strongly suspect that Lydia was indeed Jewish.

In this study of the evolution of baptism I'm trying desperately to better understand all the variables surrounding salvation and especially the act of baptism. It seems rather obvious to me that Paul continues to preach an "easy believism" gospel message when dealing with Gentiles. This extremely simple message Paul preaches is a far cry from the "Lordship salvation" promoted by folks like John McArthur. Lordship salvation teaches that, "If

God is not Lord of all, then He's NOT Lord AT all". In other words, "Tow the line, or else!"

Have you noticed that religious leaders have an insatiable appetite to heap deep seeded guilt upon their flock to increase the control they have over the masses? Lordship salvation robs believers of confidence and ultimately the joy of the Lord because their assurance of salvation comes from their own wholly inadequate works combined with the longed for approval of their religious leaders rather than directly from God.

This, folks, is the way religious empires are built on the backs of the poor unsuspecting constituency. I was truly amazed when traveling through Europe to see the opulent edifices built by the Catholic church in the middle of the last millennium. I marveled at the enormous sacrifices these structures represent for the peasantry of that era. How did the religious leaders get those desperately poor people to sacrifice so generously (arduously!) when they had so little sustenance? The average peasant was simply trying to provide for their family and survive and yet the religious organization demanded of them to construct those beautiful cathedrals. I believe the Catholics, as well as the protestants, used the overwhelming GUILT of never feeling like they had done enough for the Lord or what they viewed as his earthly ministry. Of course I don't equate any religious organization with the sincere workings of the Lord because Jesus never started a religious organization and the true biblically defined church has always been completely organic because we the people are his body, the true church.

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

# The Evolution of Baptism

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the **body**, the **church**: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Col 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his **body's** sake. **which is the church**:

I like the way Paul keeps his message simple and clear. The only requirement is belief because **belief is enough!!**

Rom 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Rom 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Let's not lose sight of the fact that the Philippian jailer is definitely a Gentile; therefore, he's never been under law, never been responsible for keeping the law, and ultimately he has never even had the chance to transgress (or sin) against the law. (Please read "Practical Look at the Law" for complete details). His salvation is uncomplicated because Gentiles didn't enjoy a 1500 yr. intimate relationship with God the Father and God didn't offer the Gentiles the same quid pro quo contract that He offered Israel. Things different are never the same.

It's true that Paul's message was completely clear and exceeding simple; however, it's also clear that Paul water baptized the jailer and those of his house. Remember, this study is about the morphing or evolving administration of baptism and we're not finished yet.

This is actually a nice segue to the next

occurrence of baptism in our study. Anyone who has read the book of Acts should recognize that Paul loves to tell his testimony. In Acts 22, Jews from Asia recognize Paul in the Jerusalem temple and they immediately create a tumultuous uproar among the Jewish people. They attack Paul beating him mercilessly until he could no longer ambulate and was fortunately rescued by soldiers who were forced to carry him up to the castle. Just before entering the castle Paul addresses the crowd with his conversion story which includes his baptismal experience.

Let's look at Paul's account as recorded in Acts

22. This is another interesting tale of baptism that is rather unique. Notice that Ananias was a devout man according to the law; therefore, he instructs Paul to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord".

Act 22:7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Act 22:8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

Act 22:9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

Act 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

Act 22:11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

Act 22:12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of

# The Evolution of Baptism

all the Jews which dwelt *there*,

Act 22:13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

Act 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

Act 22:15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

Act 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

We are studying the evolution of baptism and therefore it's important to remember that what Paul describes in Acts 22 actually happened way back in Acts 9. It's also important to remember that both Paul and the spiritual teacher God provides (Ananias) occupy prominent roles within the Jewish religion. In fact Paul is a very devout Pharisee.

I suspect that Ananias had limited understanding similar to what we encountered with Phillip in the first part of Acts 8. If you'll recall, the Samaritans gladly received Phillip's message and were promptly baptized but they didn't receive the Holy Ghost until Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem and laid hands on them. Similarly, the disciple from the upper coasts of Ephesus that Paul found in Acts 19 had believed AND been baptized but had not yet received the Holy Ghost. Paul ends up re-baptizing those folks because they had been baptized with the baptism of John which Paul considered insufficient and ineffective. The fact that they received the Holy Ghost after being re-baptized is a sure sign that Paul was correct in that situation and God was working through Paul. This aforementioned event also lends strong credence to my understanding

that the act of baptism undergoes an evolutionary process throughout the book of Acts.

Let's get back to the message of Ananias. Why would Ananias say, "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"? Well, what was John's baptism? Repent and be baptized FOR the remission of sins. I believe a strong case could be argued that the phrase, "for the remission of sins" could be restated as, "be baptized, and wash away thy sins".

One definition for the word remission is: Remission is either the reduction or disappearance of the signs and symptoms of a disease.

I think that definition works very nicely for me and fully supports my supposition. Sin could easily be described as an inherent or genetically inherited "disease" and remission is the disappearing, or washing away, of said disease (i.e. sin). Ananias, was a devout man according to the law and I believe that the understanding he had while addressing Paul in Acts 9 was rooted in what he knew from John's baptism. Also remember that Peter was still preaching John's baptism in Acts 2 so I certainly don't fault Ananias, or Phillip for that matter, that their knowledge was, shall we say, outdated. It's not just baptism, but the entire book of Acts is a transitional (evolving) record of God moving from the exclusiveness of the Jewish OT to being completely inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles in the NT church age of grace, grace, marvelous grace!

We learned earlier in this study that God made a legitimate offering of the kingdom of heaven to the Jewish nation but Israel rejected it corporately. As a result of this national rejection of their promised Messiah AND his Messianic kingdom culminating in the stoning

# The Evolution of Baptism

of Stephen in Acts 7, God begins the process of sending the gospel to non-Jewish (Gentiles) people groups beginning with the Samaritans in Acts 8. This coincides with the promise Jesus made just before he ascended into heaven.

Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The gospel message began to be published in Jerusalem (Jewish center of worship), Judaea (outlying Jewish areas), then Samaria (half breed rebellious Jews), and finally to the uttermost part of the earth (all Gentiles).

Compare Rev\_1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

According to Rev 1:5, the sins of all believers, Jew and Gentiles, are washed away by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Drum roll please...the baptism we've all been waiting for.....the last baptism we'll study.....and BY FAR the most important one in the series of baptisms.

Mat 3:11 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:

I've covered Mat. 3:11-12 at length earlier in the study but this verse does a beautiful job of setting the stage for what we are about to uncover.

Act 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

This is Jesus making the same promise to his disciples (apostles) John did in Mat. 3. Water is not connected with the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost is not connected with water. This fact is made very clear in these two verses. Things different are not the same.

**Information Interlude:** Let's take one more quick peek at the famous verse used by every Cambellite to teach baptismal regeneration.

Act 2:38 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.

In Acts 2 Peter was preaching to an all Jewish audience and he was teaching John's baptism. Please note that repentance was a requirement, followed immediately by baptism resulting in the remission of sins. That's the first part of the statement. The second part of the statement promises that those whose sins were remitted will then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. It's important to recognize that the Jews did not receive the Holy Ghost because they repented and were baptized but rather their actions resulted in their sins being remitted. The Holy Ghost was received from the resulting remission of sins which occurred because they repented first and were baptized second. Compare this to Paul's simplistic message to the Philippian prison keeper, Act 16:30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

Act 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

It appears that I'm splitting hairs in this doctrine but establishing this point will help us better understanding our final baptism which Paul explicitly describes in his epistles.

Rom 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as

# The Evolution of Baptism

were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Rom 6:4 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 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection*:

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Eph 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

This is great place to park for a moment. Throughout this study of the evolution of baptism I've identified numerous variations and deviations of the act of baptism. Sometimes the apostles laid on hands other times not, a couple places the Bible records people began speaking with other tongues, we've seen a case where the Samaritans didn't receive the Holy Ghost after baptism but received it after Peter and John came from Jerusalem and laid hands on them, Paul re-baptizes one individual in Acts 19 because they had been baptized with John's baptism. In Mat. 3:11,12 we identified three distinctly different baptisms and two of the three had nothing to do with water. Jesus clearly distinguishes between John's water baptism and the baptism of Holy Ghost in Acts 1:5 similar to Mat. 3. We also discovered that each unique administration of baptism was accompanied by an equally unique purpose for the particular event. So, that said, can anyone

explain to me how Paul can credibly make the proclamation that there is only ONE baptism? At first glance, this statement appears to be utterly UN-credible. ONE BAPTISM?? Please Paul, I want to believe that every word of the Bible is inerrant but at face value this statement makes no sense.

*(I cover Eph. 4 in great detail in my Brief Survey of Ephesians and I highly recommend you revisit it because this is an EXCEEDINGLY critical point to ponder)*

Re-reading the Brief Survey of Ephesians, the reader is reminded that Paul uses the book of Ephesians to repeatedly instruct both Jews and Gentiles of the doctrine of unity climaxing in the early verses of chapter 4. Paul wants his readers to unequivocally understand that there is no difference between the Jew and Gentile when it comes to salvation and the blessings offered by God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The church is the church, and it's the body of Christ consisting of Jews and Gentiles without distinction.

In studying the various baptisms documented in the NT, I've come to the conclusion that the act of baptizing someone evolves based on the person or group being baptized as well as the audience witnessing the event. We learned that John's baptism belonged exclusively to the Jews.

John 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

Luk 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.



# The Evolution of Baptism

We also learned that John's baptism, preached by Peter in Acts 2, administered to Paul by Ananias in Acts 9, was nullified by Acts 19. Even the most ardent detractors of this study must admit that John's baptism was no longer valid when Apollos baptizes someone in Acts 18 and Paul re-baptizes the same person in Acts 19 because Apollos had mistakenly, through sheer ignorance, administered John's baptism to the converts. Once the converts were re-baptized "in the name of the Lord" by Paul they immediately they receive the Holy Ghost. This is irrefutable proof that the purpose and administration of water baptism evolved throughout the NT.

Now back to Paul's assertion in Eph. 4 that there is only one baptism. From the beginning of this study I have consistently identified that John's baptism was strictly for the children of Israel. I also went back to the book of Exodus and tried to find where the very origins of the baptismal concept. I suggested that baptism may be grounded in the brass laver that stood between the Mosaic tabernacle and the congregation where the Levitical priests washed their hands and feet. We looked at the fact that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins which applied directly to Israel and not the Gentiles.

WHAT IF?? Bear with me for just a moment as we play the WHAT IF game regarding Paul's comment of "one baptism". What if the purpose of water baptism was to transition the Jews from the overwhelmingly legalistic laws, statutes, commandments, and religious ceremonies based the OT law to the completely libertarian grace based NT body of Christ? What if the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin (John's baptism) was valid as long as the kingdom of heaven was available to the children of Israel but immediately nullified when Jesus stood in

heaven ready for his return but instead Israel stoned Stephen? What if, when the dust all settled after Israel finally and ultimately rejected both their Messiah and his Messianic kingdom, when the chaos and ensuing confusion of the tumultuous transition from OT to NT theology finally dissipated, what if only one baptism remained? Hmm? What if Paul, through the Holy Spirit, knew precisely what he was penning in Eph. 4? If true, is this why the central and overarching theme of the entire book of Ephesians is unity, unity, unity between Jews and Gentiles? What if the Christian churches and religious organizations since shortly after the time of Christ have been making much to do about nothing (i.e. water baptism) for over 2000 years? What if the act of baptism has never, at least not since the latter days of the apostle Paul, been controlled by man or his hierarchical religious organizations but has rather been under the exclusive administrative authority of God the Father and more specifically the Holy Ghost? What if the only (one) baptism that has any meaning in heaven was administered to every disciple of Jesus Christ the moment they believed? What if the Catholics and Lutherans were correct about baptismal regeneration; not through the aspersion of water baptism but rather the baptism of the Holy Spirit? What if all the religious tapestry including ceremonies, sacraments, rites, and such like that resulted in tyrannical control of the masses is nothing but a "filthy rag" to God? What if each and every believer is completely autonomous before God with no one or no organization between them and their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? That would be a real game changer for the religious landscape worldwide.

One more look at the key verses Paul wrote in his epistles.

Rom 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as

# The Evolution of Baptism

were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Rom 6:4 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 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection:

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Eph 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, Ye know, that would explain some things!!

These next verses deal with spiritual circumcision resulting in spiritual baptism. They help us further understand the idea that there's only one baptism by the time Paul pens the book of Ephesians.

Col 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Col 2:11 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:

Col 2:12 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.

Col 2:13 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 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;