

Sunday, November 10, 2013

Matthew 28:18 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

These three short verses are what is often referred to as “The Great Commission” - it is elliptical – teaching and baptizing; hearing the word and doing according to the word. This teaching is that same preaching that this satan-inspired, demon-possessed world considers foolishness, and they will stop at nothing to corrupt, counterfeit, and silence that preaching, which is why the Lord Jesus reminds us here to remember that He has all power in heaven and earth, and that He is with us, while we obediently carry out these instructions – no matter what satanic device comes along – even unto the end of the world.

1Corinthians 1:21 “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

Romans 10:13-17 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” [that “word of God” is not only the preaching of the word, but also the express command of God, by which the Holy Spirit visits a person, and unstops their ears, in order to make that hearing effectual]

Now back to the instructions of the Lord Jesus: teach and baptize - we are to teach and hear the Gospel, and when the Holy Spirit effectuates that teaching and hearing by entering into the heart of a man and giving the gift of true repentance, according to the purpose of election, then that man must be a doer – obedient in observing all things whatsoever the Lord has commanded – the first fruits of that obedience is to submit to the blessedly simple ordinance of baptism. Let us review some scriptural examples of baptism, and then we’ll take a closer look at the concepts surrounding the purpose and practice of this blessed ordinance that the Lord Jesus Christ appointed. In each of these

examples you will clearly see the key elements of teaching, effectual hearing, a profession of repentance and belief, followed by submission to the ordinance of baptism. The first example that we should consider is the original New Testament baptism performed by John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:1-17 “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. ¶ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 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: 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. ¶ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 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: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Acts 2:37-41 “Now when they [The men of Jerusalem] heard this [the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the mouth of Peter], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as

many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

Acts 8:26-39 ”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. 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, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. [which you see by what follows, must have included the ordinance of baptism] 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? 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. 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. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”

Acts 10:44-48 “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

Acts 16:12 “And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. 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. 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.”

Acts 18:7,8 “And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man’s house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”

Being grounded in these scriptural examples of baptism, let us look more closely at the following questions: 1) What is Baptism, and what is it not? 2) Who is eligible for Baptism, and who is not? 3) How is Baptism to be administered?

1) What is Baptism, and what is it not?

The Law of the Old Testament was filled with ordinances that were to be carefully maintained by the people of God in the Earth – these ordinances, beings types and shadows of things to come, have been fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. In the New Testament Church, the Lord Jesus has left us with two powerful, yet simple to observe ordinances, which will remain until the return of our Lord. Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism is performed upon repentance, for the remission of sins. Baptism is a confession of our sinful state, our dependence upon the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and a recognition of and commitment to our duty to strive against sin. Baptism symbolizes our fellowship with Jesus Christ, being engrafted into His body, in His death, burial and resurrection. It shows our need to be dead in the flesh, and reborn in the spirit, to newness of life - putting off the old man of the flesh, and putting on the new man of the spirit. Submission to baptism is an outward indicator of saving Faith, whereby we are giving up ourselves to God through Jesus Christ, to live and walk according to His commandments.

Gill says those who are baptized are “Enlightened by the Holy Spirit to see their lost state by nature, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, seeing the end of the ordinance, which is to represent the sufferings and death, burial and resurrection of Christ (hence baptism was by the ancients called ‘illumination’, and baptized persons ‘enlightened ones’).” He also says: “Yielding obedience to this ordinance of Christ, is an evidence of love to God and Christ, and such who from a principle of love to Christ keep his commandments, may expect, according to his promise, to have fresh manifestations of his and his Father’s love, and to have communion with Father, Son, and Spirit. This is an end to be had in view, in obedience to it, and a very encouraging one.”

Baptism does not give repentance, as that can only be obtained through the free gift of God imparted by the Holy Spirit, nor does it procure pardon for sin, as that can only come from the effectual blood of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is not the end of our sinfulness. Baptism does not create salvation, nor can it be said to be required for it – look no farther than the thief on the cross. Baptism is distinct from membership in a local, visible church, although it is certainly prerequisite to membership in any church. A person is not baptized “into” a church – for example: Phillip was not operating under the authority of a particular church when he baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch, nor was he joined to a church, but rather, he continued on his journey back to Ethiopia; John the Baptist was not a pastor of any church, nor did he baptize people into any particular church. However, a baptized person has an affirmative duty to seek out and join themselves to an orderly New Testament church, that they may walk blameless according to the commandments and ordinances of God. Let me say that another way: The thief on the cross didn’t have time and place opportunity to be baptized, and to then assemble with a New Testament church; nor does an unborn babe, or an infant, have the capacity for either of those things, none of which excludes such persons from Heaven. On the other hand, when a person receives repentance, has a capacity to express it, has time and place opportunity to be baptized, and to subsequently assemble with a New Testament church, and they refuse those things, then they have brought forth rotten fruit and testify against themselves by rejecting this ordinance that Jesus Christ left us, and by forsaking the assembly. If you are such a person, then you ought to shut your mouth about serving God, as you are a hearer only, and not a doer of the word.

2) Who is eligible for baptism, and who is not?

Let's consider the accounts that we read just a bit ago. We are told that having been taught, they brought forth fruits meet for repentance; they confessed their sins, and professed a belief in the nature and power of the Triune God. Quite simply, this is all about a sincere profession of faith. Every scriptural example that we have considered today shows a person that is baptized on the same day that they make a profession. Back to the idea that baptism is distinct from being admitted as a member of a New Testament church: baptism requires a sincere profession of faith, while membership and communion with a particular church is upon agreement of the body that the person has not only made a good profession, but also exhibits a continual orderly walk. I believe that it is appropriate in many instances for a church to take up both of these two questions at once, but they are separate questions.

Those not eligible for baptism would be those who do not, or cannot give a good profession. Gill speaks to those you do not give a good profession like this: "such who are ignorant of divine things, impenitent, unbelievers, not disciples and followers of Christ, and who are destitute of the Spirit, are not proper subjects of baptism". Infants are the classic example of those who cannot give a good profession. Of course God is able to save any and all infants, and unborn babes, if in His boundless mercy He so chooses, but that's God's prerogative, and not our business to meddle with. Not only is an infant unable to give a profession of faith, but there is not one scriptural example of anything remotely resembling infant baptism. Remember that this issue has historically been a key element in the Quarrel of the Covenant. Our spiritual brethren have been persecuted, tortured, and killed for preaching against infant baptism, and refusing to subject their children to it. The whole notion of infant baptism is satanic works righteousness – pretending that humans get to preempt God in the work of salvation. If we just baptize these little brats, then we can forfeit our non-delegable duty to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The unregenerate flesh refuses to submit themselves to the Lord and His commands, His remedies, His righteousness, by vainly imagining that they have a voice in such matters. They reject the liberty of the Covenant of Grace, and seek the bondage of works, much like the Children of Israel rejecting the supernatural care of God in the wilderness, preferring to return to bondage in Egypt.

3) How is baptism to be administered?

I believe that the scriptures only show us two requirements about how baptism is to be administered to eligible individuals:

The first requirement is that it is to be done by immersion in water. Of course we know that most of the churches today have corrupted this ordinance (like the rest of the scriptures), and they simply sprinkle a few drops of water on someone.

Consider the original Greek word, “Baptizo” [Strong’s #907]

- 1) to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk)
- 2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one’s self, bathe
- 3) to overwhelm

Remember the scriptures that we have looked at today – while not all of those examples clearly state where the baptism took place, some were explicitly said to have been performed in rivers, including that of the Lord Jesus, who was said to have gone “up out of the water” after his baptism. Why would he have needed to go down into water to have a little sprinkled on him? When the Ethiopian Eunuch pointed out a river, and said “see, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”, why would he have needed that much water? Why not just sprinkle a little water out of your canteen?

Consider the very meaning of baptism: Gill says that Jesus’ “sufferings are represented by going into the water, and being overwhelmed in it, his burial by a short continuance under it, and being covered with it, and his resurrection by an emersion out of it.” Where does sprinkling fit into that equation?

Consider some of the many types of baptism in the scriptures: Noah being buried within the ark, and surrounded above and below with water; Moses and the Children of Israel being enveloped by the waters of the Red Sea; Jonah being in the belly of the whale, deep in the sea, etc.

The second requirement is that it be done in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This requirement is quite simple, and is found in the Great Commission given at Matthew 28:19. It is a proper acknowledgement of the nature and attributes of the triune God, as well as their particular parts in the work and Covenant of Grace. Remember also, that all three were visibly engaged with the baptism of Jesus Christ that we read earlier:

Matthew 3:16,17 “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: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Let me conclude with a look at Naaman. You might recall that Naaman was a powerful man; the Captain of the Host of Syria; and a leper. He came to Samaria in desperate search of the Prophet Elisha, who told him that if he washed in the Jordan River seven times, that he would be clean. Those instructions sent Naaman into a rage! It wasn't fluffy enough for him!

2Kings 5:11-14 “But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

The New Testament ordinances are plain, simple, straightforward, humble things, that are devoid of the trappings of this boastful, vain flesh! As such, these simple ordinances, like our savior, and all that He represents are rejected by the mass of unregenerate mankind. Thank God that He hasn't left us to employ our own filthy brand of righteousness, but rather has called us from darkness into the light, and has given us obedient hearts.

Ephesians 4:2-6 “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

I love you all. Amen.