

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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BAPTISM IN JOHN AND ACTS

We now begin our examination of all the passages in John's Gospel wherein "baptism" is mentioned. We must ever keep in mind that God caused the book to be written in order that: **"Ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name"** (John 20:31).

John 1:25, 26. All that we can learn about baptism from this passage is that the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to question John.

John 1:28. This gives us the location where John was performing his ministry - a place called Bethabara beyond Jordan. There is a place called Beth-barah, spoken of in Gideon's history (Judges 7:24). If it is the same place it was well-supplied with water. In hot countries when great crowds are assembled the one prime essential is water.

John 1:31. This passage declares the Israelitish character and purpose of John's baptism. It was to the end that Christ should be made manifest to Israel. John's ministry was a complete success. All Israelites living in Palestine, from the members of the great Sanhedrin down to the common laborer, were aroused to a state of attention and decision by John's baptismal ministry.

John 1:33. Jesus was and ever will be the supreme identifier. He identifies men with the Father, with Himself, and with the Holy Spirit. This is the fourth mention of identification with the Holy Spirit, and each one has declared that the Lord Jesus will be the one who does it.

John 3:22, 23, 26. These three passages are important as they give details in the personal histories of John and the Lord Jesus. They give no information as to the practice and purpose of baptism. The divine task of identifying Israelites with the submissive portion of Israel is carried on in Judea by the Lord and His disciples. John did his work in Aenon near to Salem. "Aenon" in the Greek text is *Ainon*, which all

lexicons say means a spring. There was no conflict between the ministry of the Lord and that of John. Whatever the Lord was doing in Judea, John was doing in Aenon.

John 4:1, 2 When we consider the tremendous response to John's early ministry (Matt. 3:5, Mark 1:5, Luke 3:7-15), and then read here that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, we seriously blunder if we think that the people of Palestine rejected both John and the Lord Jesus. It is written and stands true: "**The common people heard Him gladly**" (Mark 12:37).

John 10:40. A historical note that tells us where the Lord spent the last four months of His life before His crucifixion.

John 13:26. The word "dipped" here is *bapto*. It stands as a witness against all who say that baptism always means to immerse in water. It tells us nothing concerning ritual baptism. In fact all anyone can truly learn from John's Gospel concerning baptism is that John did it in order that the Messiah might be made manifest to Israel.

Acts 1:5. A reconfirmation of the promise made by John three years earlier. Spoken only to the eleven disciples whom He designated as apostles. These were to be identified, merged with, and related to the Holy Spirit. This is the fifth time this is found in the New Testament. Its message does not vary. The Lord Jesus will identify them with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:22. An important reference which shows that the disciples of the Lord Jesus were baptized by John. This prepared them for their reception of Him.

Acts 2:38. These words were addressed to, "**Ye men of Israel**" (2:22), who are charged with guilt in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Inasmuch as I am not a "man of Israel" and had nothing to do with the crucifixion, I cannot accept the idea that Peter's words were spoken to me. I do find a vast amount of transcendent truth in this chapter, but do not believe that Peter was setting forth a plan of salvation for a Gentile (or Jew) living in God's present dispensation of grace. However, in response to their question, he did tell the men of Israel gathered there exactly what they must do. First they are told to "submit." This is what the Greek word *metanoeo* means (see Issues No. **SB106**, **SB107**, **SB108** for a full treatment of this word). At all times and under all conditions submission must be the first act in any move that man makes toward God. Having submitted they are told to "be identified on (*epi*) the name of Jesus Christ." The word "on" here means they are to identify themselves on the basis of all that has been revealed concerning Him, especially His revelation of Himself. The aorist character of *baptisthento* points to a continued action. "**Be identifying each one of you upon the name of Jesus Christ,**" would better express the truth here.

True identification is not a one-shot thing. It is a constant thing that should be renewed at every opportunity. The steps set forth, submitting and identifying, had a certain end in view. This is expressed by the Greek word *eis* (for), and the purpose was to bring them into the state where remission could become a reality. One's submission and identification will not bring remission of sins to anyone. There is no shedding of blood in either of these (Heb. 9:22).

There is not one drop of water in Acts 2:38. However, if someone wants to dump a baptistry full into it there is not much we can do about it (Hos. 4: 17). It was on the basis of submission, identification, and the remission of sins that they were promised the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:41. They that welcomed the word of Peter identified themselves at once with the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus there was added on that day to the submissive believing company in Israel about three thousand souls. Thus it was that a whole new company was formed in Israel. It was no longer just Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Essenes, for a new company is added --- the submissive who identify themselves with the man Jesus. This was the beginning of that which was later called "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). At this point it will be well to quote once again the excellent words of Sir Robert Anderson: "The Divine religion of Judaism in every part of it, both in the spirit and in letter, pointed to the coming of a promised Messiah; and to maintain that a man ceased to be a Jew because he cherished that hope, and accepted the Messiah when He came - this is a position absolutely grotesque in its absurdity." The words "to the church" in verse 47 are merely an interpolation that is wholly devoid of any manuscript evidence to support it.

Acts 8:12, 13, 16. When these Samaritans, who by birth were part of the covenant God made with Abraham (See John 4: 12, their father was Jacob), believed Philip who was proclaiming the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they identified themselves with Christ. Simon, a sorcerer, believed also and became identified with the submissive, believing company. I do not believe that this was accomplished by any water ritual performed by Philip. He was an evangelist, not a baptizer.

Acts 8:36, 38. After Philip proclaimed Jesus Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch, they came upon a pool of water which prompted the eunuch to say: "**See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?**" Thus, this one who in mind and heart has already identified himself with Jesus Christ, asks Philip to outwardly confirm it. As one sent from God to this man, he could do this. It was not necessary, but it meant much to this proselyte from Ethiopia. Remember, Philip was a Jew, the eunuch was a proselyte to Judaism, and all this takes place in the land of Palestine.

Acts 9:18. Up to this time Paul had shunned all relationship to the truth being proclaimed that the man Jesus was in truth God's Messiah. He manifested full submission when he said, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" But when he was filled with the Holy Spirit and his physical sight was restored, he went into action (arose) at once and identified himself with Jesus Christ. This was in the presence of Ananias (God's deputy) and the few assembled, but his identification was not a "one shot" thing. Immediately, he heralded Jesus in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God (Acts 9:20).

Acts 10:37. The "baptism of John" is mentioned here as a historical beginning of the proclamation of a certain message.

Acts 10:47. Those men who made up the household of Cornelius, upon whom the Holy Spirit fell, were Gentiles. They were a God fearing company and as such they were accepted by God (10:35). In a simple but powerful manner the resurrected Christ was revealed to them by Peter, including the promise that whosoever believeth in Him would receive remission of sins (10:43). They received this truth and as a confirmation of their belief, they began to speak fluently in the many languages that were spoken by the polyglot group that made up the household of Cornelius. This evidence caused Peter to ask: "Can any man forbid the water ritual that these should not be identified with us which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" So, a man who could bind a thing on earth and it would be bound in heaven, commanded them to be identified by means of the water ritual in the name of the Lord (10:48).

Acts 13:24. A more accurate translation of this passage is needed here: "**The previous proclaiming of John, before his personal entrance was a summons to identification unto submission to all the people of Israel.**"

Acts 16:15. Most people see a water ritual here, that being the only baptism they know. I see a great and admirable woman identifying herself and her whole household with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 16:33. I see no water here, but I do see a sinner identifying himself with the Savior.

Acts 18:8. Why bring a water ritual into the picture presented here? Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue believed along with all his house, and many of the Corinthians hearing the gospel also believed and were identified. And how was this done? I trust it was done by taking their stand in the synagogue and respectfully declaring their belief. The atmosphere may not have been friendly, but their avowal of Christ would have been effective (Matt. 10:32).

Acts 19: 3, 4, 5. If water baptism is set forth in Acts 19:5, then this was rebaptism of these twelve Jews. Was the Lord Jesus baptized in water twice? Were the twelve disciples baptized twice? If not, why then these twelve men? Bringing in water creates confusion here.

End Issue No. SB145