

The One Faith / One Baptism

As we continue in our study of some things that are not given to judgment but are written in stone, things of doctrine, we want to remember the difference between doctrine and judgment. Doctrine is inviolate, must not, cannot, and should not ever be changed. Judgments are those things that God has not specified but has left up to us to make the best judgment that we can based upon what He has given us in His Word. One of the problems with judgment is that we all see things differently, we all come to different conclusions about things. We looked at the idea of eating meat sacrificed to idols and how that God states categorically that there is nothing wrong with eating it because an idol is nothing but a hunk of wood or metal or whatever. But Paul also talks about the fact that there are some who hold the opinion that that meat should not be eaten and in their minds the eating of it is sin. It isn't, but Paul's point is that if he, in his understanding that the meat is fine, eats that meat and those who have the opposite opinion follow his example, he has lead them to sin against their own conscience, and if he knows what is happening and continues in his arrogance, then he is also sinning. So, not only must we be careful in the judgments we make, we must also be careful in how we manifest those judgments.

Paul could eat the meat all he wanted and not sin, he just needed to be careful not to flaunt it in the face of those who thought it sin. And then, there is also the issue of what those of the world see. I might have the freedom to engage in an activity, but if that activity somehow conveys to the world that we approve of or condone something that to them makes us like them, then we truly need to consider the efficacy of the activity. For example, there is nothing sinful, according to the scriptures, of us all bringing a meal and having a potluck here at the building, that said, why don't we? The answer lies in how the world would interpret that activity.

1 *Thess 5:19-22*

1

19 Do not quench the Spirit; **20** do not despise prophetic utterances. **21** But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; **22** abstain from every form [appearance] of evil.

The KJV here says "appearance." The idea being that we don't ever want to seem to be like the world. The standard we live by must be sanctified, set apart from any other. If the world sees us engaging in what they do, they then think that we are no different than they. The judgments we make are vitally important as also is how we practice them. We established that there is one God, the Father of all, one Lord, and one Spirit. This is God. You can call it the God-Head, the Trinity, whatever suits you but understand that there is but...

2

ONE GOD

So, we have been looking at the doctrines that God established through Paul in...

Eph 4:4-6

3

4 There is one body and **one Spirit**, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; **5** **one Lord**, one faith, one baptism, **6** **one God and Father** of all who is over all and through all and in all.

These are things that we all need to understand. There is only one God. **4** Isn't that what verse 6 here is saying. There is but one God who is over all. And, as we have seen, there is one Lord and one Spirit **5** that are a part of the one God. Exactly how that works, I can't explain, but work it does, as there is but one God.

As we continue in this study, we are going to look at the ideas of One Faith and One Baptism. **6**

The brother of James the Less, who was also known as Lebbeaus and or Thadeus, is the Judas who wrote the Epistle of Jude, which is found just preceding the Book of Revelation in your

Bibles. In his letter he addresses some thoughts concerning some things that were occurring at this time. Apparently a concentrated effort had been started by certain ones claiming the ability to interpret dreams, some scholars say they were even claiming the ability to exorcise demons from people, and this was becoming a problem in the Church. The close resemblance of this letter to 2 Peter seems to confirm the problem that was spreading. It also seems to suggest that one author had a copy of the other's letter, as so many of the thoughts that are presented are similar. Regardless, Jude opens his Epistle by exhorting them in verse 3...

Jude 3

7

3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

There are many passages in the New Testament that refer to this idea of...

8

The Faith

Paul uses this same language in...

1 Cor 16:13

9

13 Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

These passages, and so many others, illustrate that this "Faith" was something that went beyond what a man chooses to believe or accept on a personal level. You might hold the opinion, have a faith if you will, that fish is the most delicious meal ever. I hold a different opinion, a different faith. Which is correct? Depends on what you choose to believe. That is NOT what these passages indicate at all. The Faith under discussion is not something that is based on personal preference or opinion, rather it is a set standard of proscriptions that God has put into place that are not open to man's judgments. This is where so many in the world fail so miserably. They ignore God's commands, they put their own spin on them so they can justify and excuse their actions. Note what we see in...

Acts 6:7

10

7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

People that were being converted to God, Christ, the Spirit were being converted by becoming obedient to "The Faith." The standard of doctrine that God has put into place. This is an important point. Regardless of how man views this standard, whether they believe it and practice it, or they deny it entirely, or they choose to selectively pick what parts they will or won't observe, this standard will be what, in the final analysis, determines their ultimate, eternal home. That is doctrine, that ultimately there is only one standard, one faith, that all men will answer to.

John 12:47-48

11

47 If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

It doesn't get much more clear than that. The Word of God will judge man in that last day.

2 Thess 1:7-8

12

7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Herein is the danger of not believing or accepting the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or even changing it to suit our own needs, retribution will come to everyone who does not obey that Gospel.

2 Cor 5:10

13

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Now think about what these two passages say. **2 Thess.** is quite clear, we will all be judged by the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and then, **2 Cor.** tells us that we will be judged by what we do in the body. Common sense logic dictates that we understand that God is saying that how we approach the Gospel of Jesus while in this life, is going to be what we are judged by when this life is over, what other conclusion could there possibly be?

Heb 9:27

14

27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

We will all die, and we will all be judged by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Knowing that, what should our response to that Gospel be?

That is the importance of our understanding that...

15

The Gospel is The One Faith

This is the irrefutable doctrine of God. Not to be argued. There is only one faith that is the standard that God uses to judge the lives of all men and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Bible, is that one standard...

16

The One Faith

That one faith is how God reveals to man what His doctrines are...

Eph 4:11-13

17

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

This list, if you will, of those who carry the Gospel to others, includes every child of God in some form. While we can't be inspired Apostles and prophets, we are some evangelists, some Pastors, elders, and most definitely all teachers. We all have the responsibility to teach the Gospel to everyone we can. That is the task that has been given to all Christians and Paul tells us the goal of teaching God's Word...

18

Unity of the Faith

Now this might seem to fly in the face of the idea of judgments or liberties. The question might be asked; how can we all be united in the faith if we have differences of opinions. Does this passage mean that we all must agree completely on every facet of understanding, every degree of opinion? I don't think so. On the occasion of Paul and Barnabas preparing to leave for the second missionary journey in...

Acts 15:36-40

19

36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." **37** Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. **38** But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. **39** And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. **40** But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement, a difference of opinion that was so sharp that they chose to go their separate ways. Do you think this means that they were not in the unity of the faith? How foolish a conclusion that would be? They were both still committed on spreading the Gospel to all, they just had a difference of opinion. The point is that mature, loving Christians should be able to have a disagreement of opinions without causing a rift in their unity of the faith. The purpose of the faith is to bring man into a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ and as long as we are all committed to that purpose in accordance with the Gospel then we are in unity of the faith.

It is that faith that defines for all men what God's plan is. In...

1 Peter 3:21

20

21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God

That is doctrine, the one baptism that Paul speaks of in Eph.4. There are not multiple baptisms, just one. It may be an unfortunate translation that chose to transliterate the Greek word...

21

Baptisma

Interestingly, the actual meaning of this word from the Greek is...

Ba/ptisma NT:908

(Bap'-tis-mah); from NT:907; immersion, baptism (technically or figuratively):

The root that this word comes from is...

Bapti/zw, baptize NT:907

(Bap-tid'-zo); from a derivative of NT:911; to immerse, submerge; to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the N. T.) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism:

It becomes even more interesting when we see that the word has but one meaning. This is very unusual in the translation of the Koine Greek. Most of the time there is some ambiguity in figuring out the meaning of a word. While the definitions will all be similar, rarely do we see but one meaning for a word. But with Baptizo or any of its derivatives there is but one meaning...

22

Immersion

Now follow this line of thinking. The Tyndale Bible is seen to be the first translation into the English language of the scriptures in 1526. He used the Greek and Hebrew texts of the New and Old Testaments in addition to Jerome's Latin translation. The King James version was begun in 1604 and finished in 1611, also using the Greek, Hebrew, and Latin manuscripts. These works are the basis for later translations such as the Revised, New American Standard, International, and Living Bible versions, among others. The understanding that baptism was a complete immersion was what was practiced in the New Testament Church. It wasn't until other so-called religions began to rise that the concept of immersion began to be perverted. There were a few different reasons for this perversion to happen though none of them can be found in either the scriptures or the traditional practices of the early Church. But there are two basic reasons why the adulteration began and baptism was eventually changed from its original form and came to involve having a little water sprinkled or poured on one's head. Two reasons brought about this change.

The first was the practice of waiting until late in life to accept baptism so that one could die very soon thereafter before having amassed a big load of sins. By waiting so late, some risked dying before getting to a pool of water sufficient for a total immersion. As a compromise, the practice of sprinkling began to occur. This was in fact referred to as "***clinical***" baptism, and was considered suspect by many, especially in North Africa. As an example of this, it is said that Emperor Constantine, in 337 AD, was baptized on his deathbed by Eusebius of Nicomedia.

A second reason was the beginning of baptizing infants, something neither commanded nor illustrated in the New Testament. There probably began to be occasional baptisms of infants in the late 2nd century, but it did not gain wide acceptance until the time of Augustine (AD 354-430). Augustine took the position that infants inherit the sin of Adam and Eve, and therefore are born sinners and should be baptized soon after their birth. The opposing view, championed by Pelagius Circa 415, claimed infants are born without sin, and become sinners when they are able to understand right and wrong and choose wrong. At that point, they should be baptized. Unfortunately, Augustine convinced the bulk of the church to accept his view.

Now at the time of the Tyndale and the KJV translations the primary religions of the world, excluding what I call the far east religions, Muslim, Buddhist, or others of that sort, were the Catholic, which was the largest, the Church of England, which was spread throughout the World in The English empire, and the Greek Orthodox. Interestingly, all of these practice sprinkling as baptism, for the reasons we've already looked at. What influence do you think they might have had in the transliteration of the Greek as opposed to the literal translation, immersion?

The fact of baptism, immersion, as being necessary for salvation should be undisputed, Peter says it is what saves us.

Acts 2:37-38

23

37 Brethren, what shall we do?" **38** Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In response to the plea from the people, Peter tells them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The only name by which man can be saved, **Acts 4:12**. In **Col. 2** and **Rom. 6** baptism is represented as man's partaking of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Baptism is the avenue by which man accesses the blood of Christ that frees him from his sin and allows him to enter into a covenant relationship with God.

Acts 22:16

24

16 And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name

Paul, after Christ appeared to him on the road, was told to arise and be baptized to wash away his sins.

There is a point that needs to be made concerning this one baptism, a fallacy that some teach concerning it is that it is the agent by which man is added to the Church. That is not what is said or taught in Acts 2. That's not to say that there isn't a peripheral connection between them, but 1 Pet 3 is plain, baptism saves as a result of hearing the one faith, believing what that one faith says, repenting, changing our will to God's as revealed in that one faith, and confessing that Jesus is the Son of God. Acts 2 is just as plain, the Lord adds to the Church. The connection is that the Lord adds those that are saved, and baptism is what saves, but the scriptures are very clear, baptism is not the vehicle that puts us into the Church, the Lord puts us into the Church. Baptism puts us into a position to come into contact with the blood of Christ because of the steps we have taken prior to it.

There is only one baptism and that is the doctrine of immersion as seen in the one faith for the remission of sin, it isn't sprinkling, or pouring, or for the purpose of adding to the Church.

The real point is that all men will be judged by how they have accepted or rejected the One Faith, the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and that includes baptism as the culmination of man's our journey to salvation through Jesus Christ.

There is One Faith, one standard, one doctrine by which man will be judged and that doctrine dictates that baptism, immersion, is absolutely necessary for salvation.